

**Constructing Britain and the EU: A Discourse Theoretical Account of
the EU Treaty Reform Process 2003-2007**

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Declaration

I declare that this thesis is of my own composition, based on my own work, with acknowledgement of other sources, and has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification.

Benjamin Hawkins.

Edinburgh, 25 August 2009.

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Abstract

This study aims to address the longstanding questions surrounding the consistently low levels of support articulated towards the European Union (EU) by British citizens. Existing studies highlight that political identities are closely related to the levels of support citizens across the EU express for the process of European integration. Citizens who define their identity in exclusively national terms tend also to oppose the process of European integration and their country's participation in this process. Present studies, however, fail to provide an adequate account of the emergence of exclusively national identities and their prevalence in member-states such as the UK. The citizens of the UK have expressed consistently low levels of support for the process of European integration and for British membership of what is now the EU, since Britain's accession to the European Economic Community (EEC) over 30 years ago. Similarly, the UK has one of the highest proportions of citizens who define their identity in exclusively national terms of any EU member-state.

The argument presented in this thesis is that the low levels of support for the EU and the prevalence of exclusively national identity constructions amongst UK citizens must be understood in the context of British discourses about the EU. I employ the conception of subjectivity developed by post-structuralist discourse theory in order to examine the emergence of an exclusively national form of British identity within media debates on the EU treaty reform process. Discourse theory offers a set of concepts and logics through which it is possible to investigate the structure of eurosceptic discourses. Furthermore, drawing on the insights from Lacanian psychoanalysis, it is able to account also for the strength and longevity of these constructions of national identity.

This thesis identifies a eurosceptic discourse of British national identity characterised by an underlying logic of nationalism, according to which nations are seen as natural political communities and the nation-state the most logical unit of political organisation. This is evident not only in debates about the powers of the EU, but also in the relationship constructed between the UK and other member-states in the EU. In addition, the EU is itself constructed as a quasi-state and functions in these discourses as the 'other' against which Britain is defined. The former is seen as a hostile, foreign power bent on assuming ever greater control over the UK. These constructions of Britain and the EU feed into fantasmatic constructions of subjugation and oppression, which help account for the strength and resilience of eurosceptic discourses.

The final part of the thesis examines the pro-European voices in the British media. However, it is not possible to discern a coherent pro-European discourse in the same way in which it is possible to identify the eurosceptic discourse. I outline the extent to which these pro-European voices challenge the predominant eurosceptic discourse, and offer alternative constructions of Britain's relationship with the EU which may form the basis of more inclusive identity constructions.

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1. Introduction

The UK does not have a bilateral relationship with the EU. It is part of the EU. We are all in the same boat.

- Jose Manuel Durão Barroso, President of the European Commission

On 12 October 2007, several British daily newspapers published the above quotation from European Commission president on the relationship between Britain and the EU (see Chapman, *Mail*, 12 October 2007). The fact that it is necessary (or even possible) for a senior Commission official to make such a statement in the lead-up to a European Council summit is indicative of the way in which the position of Britain in the EU is presented in the British media. More accurately, this quotation reflects the way in which a relationship, *between* Britain and the EU (as a separate, external) entity is constructed by media commentators and political actors alike.

At the same time, Barroso's words are indicative of a residual and underlying reticence on the part of many British citizens towards the EU. There is little sense, judging either from media debates or opinion poll data, that Britons feel they are 'in the same boat' as those they characterise (unlike themselves) as 'Europeans.' The focus of the present study is on the discursive construction of the EU in British debates about the EU treaty reform process, and the impact this has on the level of support for the EU amongst British citizens.

The argument presented here is that, within the predominant, eurosceptic discourse of British national identity, the EU is positioned as a hostile, foreign body against which the identity of Britain as a political and cultural entity is constructed. Within this discourse, the EU is seen to pose a direct threat to Britain's political and economic interests. Moreover, since there is an absence of a robust and coherent pro-European counter discourse in the British media, the eurosceptic discourse is able to set the agenda in debates about the EU.

By presenting an account of political subjectivity grounded in post-structuralist discourse theory, I argue that these antagonistic constructions of Britain

and the EU have a deep impact on the identity constructions of British citizens. Britishness and Europeanness are constructed as mutually incompatible identities within the predominant eurosceptic discourse of British national identity.

Existing studies on public opinion towards the EU have suggested that exclusively national identities are closely associated with low levels of support for the European integration process (Hooghe and Marks, 2005; 2009). However, these studies lack a clear and coherent account of how exclusively national identity structures emerge, and why the prevalence of this form of identity varies between member-states. The present study aims to supplement this literature by providing a theory of political identity formation able to account for the prevalence of exclusively national identities in Britain.

1.1 Public Support for the EU

The question of public support for the process of European integration is both one the most pressing issues facing the EU, and an issue of long-standing interest to political scientists. The case of Britain, and British attitudes towards the EU, has proven to be a particularly vexed issue for both politicians and scholars alike. Consequently, a study which is able to reconceptualise this issue and offer a new and insightful account of British attitudes towards the EU is much needed.

British citizens have expressed consistently low levels of support for the process of European integration and for Britain's membership of the EU (Nugent, 1992; Diez-Medrano, 2003; Geddes, 2004; George, 1998; Aspinwall, 2004). The Eurobarometer survey of citizens attitudes to the European integration consistently show Britain as expressing the lowest level of support for EU initiatives of any EU member-state (see Eurobarometer, 2007). Britons are also those least prepared to define their identity as at least partly European (Eurobarometer, 2003).

Consequently, Britain has come to be regarded, both at home and abroad, as the 'land of eurosceptics' (Diez, 1998), or of 'allergic Europeans' (Aspinwall, 2004). However, as Diez himself goes on to explain, this is an oversimplified, blanket

assessment of the nuanced and multi-faceted spectrum of opinion that exists about the nature of Britain's relationship with the EU. Nevertheless, it is hard to deny that aggregate levels of support for the EU in Britain lag behind those in almost all other member-states (Nugent, 1992; George, 1998; Diez-Medrano, 2003; Geddes, 2004; Aspinwall, 2004). Despite the manifold problems associated with opinion poll data of this kind, it would appear that, when asked to express an opinion on the EU, the majority of British citizens express opposition to the further advancement of European integration and their country's participation in this process. There is by now an extensive literature on citizens' attitudes towards the European Union. In order to understand the contribution my project is able to make to this issue it is essential to place it within the context of these existing studies.

1.1.1 Explaining Public Support for the EU: The Existing Literature

Recent studies have argued that explanations of support for European integration must take into account not simply economic factors but also individual identity constructions (Hooghe and Marks, 2009: 14). Lauren McLaren (2002) argues for example that antipathy towards the EU must be explained not in terms of rational cost-benefit calculations but in terms of a more general hostility towards other cultures. Those who are less open or less positively disposed towards other cultures, tend to oppose European integration. Similarly, De Vreese and Boomgaarden (2005) have found that those who oppose immigration also tend to oppose European integration.

Sean Carey's (2002) found that those individuals who demonstrated a strong attachment to their nation, and who expressed high levels of national pride, were also likely to oppose integration. However, national identity would appear to have different effects on support for the EU in different national contexts. Whilst Christin and Trechsel (2002) found a correlation between attachment to the nation and opposition to EU membership amongst Swiss citizens, Haesley (2001) found that, in the case of Scottish and Welsh respondents, strong national identities were actually associated with *higher* levels of support for European integrations. This would seem

to be reflected in the support for EU integration expressed by both Scottish and Welsh nationalist parties in recent years.

Citrin and Sides (2004) claim to have found evidence of an increasing Europeanisation of identity structures as people develop a sense of Europeanness that coexists alongside their (still predominant) national identity constructions. However, it would appear that this process is far from uniform and that citizens of certain member-states are far more likely than others to define their identities in exclusively national terms (Eurobarometer, 2003). British citizens are the most likely of any national grouping to define their identity in exclusively national terms, whilst citizens in Spain, for example, are far more likely to define their identity as (at least partly) European. If there are large variations between member-states in terms of the numbers of citizens expressing exclusively national identity constructions, how are we to account for these differences?

Whilst the above studies can highlight certain correlations between identity structures and attitudes towards the EU, they are unable to explain how these variations come about. This requires a far more nuanced account of why individuals in one country have a greater propensity to develop exclusive national identities than those in another. Why, for example, are British citizens more likely than any other national group to define themselves in purely national terms, eschewing any idea that they are at least partly European? It is impossible to answer these questions without taking into account the specific national conditions in which individual identities emerge.

Hooghe and Marks (2005) take the theorisation of the effects of national identity a step further, distinguishing between those who define their identity in purely (exclusive) national terms and those who define themselves as possessing a multi-layered (inclusive) identity consisting of both national and European components. In an evaluation of several competing explanatory models of European integration they found that exclusive national identity was amongst the most powerful explanatory factors in their analysis (Hooghe and Marks, 2005: 433).

Where national elites were divided on the question of Europe, exclusive national identity was found to have an even greater negative effect on levels of support than in member-states where there was a general consensus on the European project amongst elites.

Interestingly, however, whilst there was a clear divide in terms of their level of support for European integration between those possessing exclusive and inclusive identities, there appeared to be no discernible difference in attitudes towards integration between those whose inclusive identity was defined in primarily national or European terms, i.e. between those who considered themselves French and European versus those who considered themselves to be European and French (Hooghe and Marks, 2005: 433)

1.1.2 The 'Gap' in the Current Literature

Hooghe and Marks (2005, 2009) present a highly plausible account of the effect of political identity constructions on the opinions articulated by survey respondents towards the process of European integration. They conclude that political identity is the most effective predictor of anti-EU sentiment amongst the general public, who exhibit lower levels of knowledge and understanding of EU affairs than political elites or party activists (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). These people are unlikely to possess sufficient levels of knowledge about the EU and its impact on them or their member-states to base their opinions on complex calculations of self-interest, and so tend to be guided in their outlook by more general conceptions of identity and political allegiance. Citizens who define their political identity in narrow, exclusively national terms, they argue, are likely to oppose integration. This effect is especially pronounced in member-states where the political elite are divided over the question of European integration and their country's place within it.

Their findings would seem to be born out in the case of the UK, which has both low levels of support amongst its citizenry for European integration, and the highest percentage of citizens of any EU member-state who define their political identity in purely national terms (Eurobarometer, 2003). Moreover, there are

divisions both between and within the main British political parties on the question of Europe. Whilst the major political parties support British membership of the EU, they vary greatly in the strength of their support. Whilst the Liberal Democrats are strong advocates of Britain's participation in the European integration project, the Conservative Party support both a minimalist conception of the EU and a less engaged role for Britain within it. Within the parties themselves the opinions of individual members vary greatly from official policies. For example, despite the official Conservative party policy of tacit support for continued British membership of the EU, certain sections of the party have been highly critical of many aspects of the EU, and some MPs on the eurosceptic wing of the party have even advocated Britain's complete withdrawal from the EU.

Whilst the studies set out above offer an insight into the factors which cause antipathy towards the EU, they do not offer an account of the processes through which citizens come to construct their identities in these narrow, exclusionary terms. Moreover, they do not engage with the issue of why citizens in certain member-states are more likely than those in other states to define their identities in this way. This study aims to fill the gap which exists in the current literature by focusing on the impact of social context and broader societal discourses on the formation of national identity. In this way, the post-structuralist methodology employed here looks to build on and supplement the insights drawn from existing studies.

Some scholars have, however, attempted to tackle this issue from the perspective of differing social contexts. Manuel Diez-Medrano (2003) attempts to explain variations in identity constructions between states in terms of differing national histories, arguing that British, Spanish and German attitudes to the EU must be understood in terms of the specific socio-cultural frames through which they are viewed. Whilst for Spaniards and Germans, European integration symbolises the emancipation from an inglorious past, for the British EU membership is the institutional embodiment of Britain's loss of status and influence in the world and serves only as a reminder of its decline as a nation. Britain is constructed in terms which are inherently antithetical to the rest of Europe, and the central reference

points of British identity are rooted in the twentieth century and its history of European conflict.

These accounts, however, are open to the criticism that they treat the key terms of the debate as necessary and unproblematic. There is an underlying assumption that the history of the nations and states concerned are an objective set of facts which determine the way in which citizens view the interests and mission of their country in the world. In contrast to this objectivist conception of history, it is possible to argue that the account of Britain's history, in terms of which the cultural identity of Britain is explained by Diez-Medrano, is only one particular version of that history amongst many potential and conflicting interpretations and narratives. Historical narratives, far from giving us direct and unfettered access to the objective truth of past events, offer only partial, contestable and, above all, highly politicised accounts of the past. One need only look at the extent to which even democratic governments guard the teaching of history and the content of school curricula to see the extent to which the use of history is political.

From a constructivist perspective, histories are produced rather than discovered. They are dependent on the inter-subjective transmission of information across time and space in which they are shaped and moulded by the interests, biases and dispositions of those responsible for their dissemination. The histories which emerge from this process may become 'received wisdom' or 'common knowledge' but, as I will argue in more detail in Chapter 2, the apparent objectivity which these accounts assume does not detract from their essential instability and contestability.

If we accept this constructivist account of national identity, it is inadequate to explain attitudes and opinions in terms of an essentialist reading of history since the emergence and maintenance of hegemonic historical narratives must themselves be accounted for. In the case of British euroscepticism, the resilience of one specific account of British history – in which the Britain's position as a colonial power, World War II victor and its special relationship to the USA are the central motifs – is itself in need of explanation. If other articulations of British history and British

identity are possible, how can we account for the longevity of the existing identity structures and the accounts of history and politics on which they depend? The fact there has been no competing discourse of Britishness that has emerged to challenge the tired post-imperial account of Britain (Leonard, 1997) does not mean that such an alternative vision is impossible, or that the particular account of history we are taught reflects objective reality. Instead, it means that this specific account of national identity has achieved and consolidated a position of pre-eminence, and it is the processes through which this is achieved which must be explained.

1.2 Contribution of the Present Study

This thesis aims to respond to the perceived gaps in the existing literature highlighted above by offering an account of the process through which narrow, exclusively national identities are constructed in the UK. The present study will draw on post-structuralist discourse theory to develop an account of political subjectivity which is able to explain the prevalence of exclusively national identities within the UK. The argument presented here is that political identity is inextricably linked to the discursive context in which individuals are situated. In the case of the UK, the prevalence of exclusively national identities results from the construction of Britain and Europe as mutually exclusive terms. Europe is the ‘other’ against which Britishness is constructed. The consequence of this is that the identity constructions of individual British citizens draw almost exclusively upon narratives of Britishness which overtly exclude any complimentary European component.

Discourse theory sees all meaning and all identities as relational and constructed. Social objects achieve their identity in terms of the differential position they occupy within a specific order of discourse. However, it is not only the identity of objects which are constructed in discourse, but also those of individual subjects. A range of subject positions are constructed within any particular order of discourse. These are structural positions within a discourse, which confer on the individuals who occupy them a certain identity associated with that subject position. Individuals construct their identities by identifying themselves with the subject positions available to them within a given order of discourse. The specific identity of a subject

position is conferred by the position it occupies within the overarching structure of a discourse, and the relationship this establishes between the subject position in question and all other available subject (and object) identities. Identity, therefore, is not the outward manifestation of some inner essence which individuals possess but, rather, a result of the interaction of the individual with the discursive environment in which they are situated.

From a discourse theoretical perspective, any study which aims to understand the processes through which specific political identities emerge must, therefore, focus on the constructed meanings which political objects obtain within a discursive context, and the emergence of certain subject positions through which individuals are able to construct their identities. The argument developed in the current project is that, in the case of Britain, the predominance of citizens who define their identity in exclusively national terms can be explained by the hegemony of what can be termed the eurosceptic discourse of British national identity.

Within this discourse, the terms Britain and Europe are constructed as radically heterogeneous from one another. Since Britishness is constructed as fundamentally incompatible with Europeanness, there are few (if any) available constructions of Britishness which include a European element or which see Europeanness as an integral part of Britishness. The subject positions available for citizens to occupy reflect these underlying constructions of Europe as the ‘other’ against which Britain is defined. For this reason British citizens, given the discursive context within which they are situated, are highly likely to define their identities in exclusively national terms.

Whilst discourse theory is able to account for the structure of eurosceptic discourses, Lacanian theory – from which many of the insights of post-structuralist theory are drawn – is able to account for the strength and longevity of particular discourses and identity constructions (Glynos and Howarth, 2007; Stavrakakis, 2005). The present study will, therefore, attempt to highlight the fantasmatic support structures which maintain the eurosceptic discourse and position individuals as

subjects within this discourse. In so doing, it is hoped that the present study will build on the insights of Yannis Stavrakakis (2005), who argues that Lacanian theory – and the Lacanian concept of enjoyment in particular – enable us to understand the emotive power of nationalist discourses. In his work, Stavrakakis gives the eurosceptic discourse of the British tabloid press as an example of the affective and ‘obscene’ dimension of nationalist discourses in action. The present study draws on the theoretical and analytical insights Stavrakakis develops, but deploys them in a more detailed and wide-ranging study of British debates on the EU. The present study includes tabloid and broadsheet newspapers studies over a four year period and, most notably, attempts to link the insights which can be drawn from Lacanian theory to the question of public opinion and beliefs about the EU.

In addition to its principal aim of investigating the issue of British euroscepticism, the current project aims to contribute to the ongoing debates amongst discourse theorists about the potential contribution discourse theory can make to the study of the social world (see Norval, 2000; Torfing, 2005). Discourse theory has been deployed to study a wide array of different social and political phenomena (see Howarth and Torfing, 2005; Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000; Smith, AM, 1994; 1995; Campbell, 1998). Given the productive use made of discourse theory in areas such as gender and cultural studies, recent scholarship in the field has focussed on the potential expansion of discourse theory as an analytical tool into areas in which it has previously been absent (Torfing, 2005).

This study aims to respond to the call by discourse theorists for a new generation of scholars who are able to critically engage with the legacy of existing discourse theoretical research and to assess the potential contribution which discourse theory is able to make to areas of social and political analysis from which it has hitherto been excluded (Torfing, 2005).

The issue of citizens’ attitudes towards the EU, I argue, is an example of precisely the kind of area in which discourse theory can contribute to our knowledge and understanding. Whilst public opinion research is traditionally the preserve of

mainstream social science, the latter has been unable to fully explain the endemically low levels of support for the EU in the UK.¹ This study aims to approach the issue from a different perspective and, in so doing, offer a new and insightful account of a long-standing issue of interest to scholars of the EU. Consequently, a different set of methodological tools are employed to analyse the construction of individual identity within political discourses and the ramifications this has for opinion towards the EU. It is hoped, therefore, that this study will contribute to the development of discourse theory as an approach to studying the social world and help to broaden the potential applications of discourse theory to new range of issues only partially understood through the use of more traditional approaches.

1.3 Discourse Theory as a Research Tool

Post-structuralist discourse theory presents a comprehensive social ontology, which accounts for the emergence of social objects as meaningful entities within contingent, historical structures known as discourses. However, it is the explicit aim of discourse theorists that the concepts and logics they develop are deployed to conduct empirical research into issues of key political importance (Howarth, 2000; 2005; Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000; Torfing, 1999). Indeed, theoretical innovations within discourse theory have occurred only to the extent that they are able to facilitate new insights into specific issues of social and political importance.

Discourse theory is an essentially problem driven research agenda, and takes as its starting point issues which are poorly understood or have only partially been explained by existing research (Howarth, 2005: 318; Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 34). The underlying aim is to develop new and insightful accounts of these hitherto vexed issues and to bring a deeper understanding of apparently anomalous or opaque social practices. In this sense, the development of discourse theory is a response to the

¹ The term mainstream social science is derived from the work of Charles Taylor (1979: 29), who employs it to refer to those approaches which have as their goal the causal explanation of the social world and the prediction of future events. This conception of the social science research is defined by what Taylor describes as the verificationist model of inquiry and the epistemological tradition of empiricism.

perceived inadequacy of mainstream social science, or indeed any other approach, to adequately explain society and politics (Howarth, 2000: 1).

Discourse theoretical research is also a fundamentally interpretative activity. The researcher is involved in a process in which they attempt to make sense of practices and actions through the lens of a new conceptual architecture based around discourse theory's distinctive social ontology. In this sense, the goal of the discourse theorist is to better understand their object of study. However, for discourse theorists, the process of interpreting and understanding an object of study is closely related to the goal of explanation (Glynos and Howarth, 2007).

As will be discussed in greater detail in Chapter 3, the process of conducting discourse theoretical research involves a fundamental rearticulation of the object of study using the concepts and logics of discourse theory to offer a new and distinct account of the emergence and maintenance of certain objects and practices (Howarth 2000: 131). However, by rearticulating their object of study in these terms, discourse theorists are simultaneously engaged in a process of analysing and interpreting their objects of study using the same discourse theoretical concepts through which they are defined and described. The process of understanding and explaining an object of study is thus internal to, and indistinguishable from, the process through which it is constructed as an object of study (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 34).

1.4 Research Methodology

An increasing amount of attention has been paid by discourse theorists in recent years to questions of method and methodology (Glynos and Howarth, 2007; Howarth 2000; 2005; Torfing 2005). However, when addressing such issues it is crucial to highlight that the conception of methodology has very different connotations for discourse theorists than it does for those working in mainstream social science. As David Howarth (2005: 317) argues:

Method is not synonymous with a free standing and neutral set of rules and techniques that can be applied mechanically to all empirical objects. Instead,

while discourse theorists ought to reflect upon and theorize the ways they conduct research, these questions are always understood within a wider set of ontological and epistemological postulates, and in relation to particular problems.

For discourse theorists, therefore, questions of methodology imply the reflexive engagement of the scholar with the case at hand: the specific questions (s)he poses and the means (s)he uses to go about answering those questions. What is necessary is an explicit statement of the ontological and epistemological assumptions informing a project and the detailed account of the research agenda pursued (see also Hansen, 2006). There is no single, uniform set of methodological procedures which could be identified as *the* discourse theoretical approach to social and political research (Phillips and Jorgensen, 2002: 24). Indeed, a highly prescriptive methodology would be out of keeping with discourse theory's underlying ontology (Howarth, 2000: 133-4).

Existing studies conducted by discourse theorists offer some guidance to those who wish to employ the logics and concepts of discourse theory in new areas (Campbell, 1998; Norval, 1996; Smith, AM, 1994), although they should be approached as *examples* of discourse theory at work and not as definitive, prescriptive accounts of how discourse theory ought to be applied. The role of the discourse theorist in uncharted waters is not to adhere rigorously to a predetermined methodology, but to develop and apply the logics and concepts of discourse theory in novel and innovative ways in order to provide insightful accounts of vexed and poorly explained questions (Torfing, 1999).

Each new research project necessitates a further refinement and development of the concepts provided by discourse theory to meet the specific demands it presents (Howarth, 2000: 133). Torfing (1999: 12) argues that the discourse theorist is like an analytical *bricoleur* using the conceptual tools at their disposal creatively and innovatively to meet the challenges of the specific research agenda in which they are engaged. Nevertheless, whilst discourse theorists must develop and mould their concepts to the specific issues they wish to investigate, any application of these concepts and logics must be in keeping with the ontological assumptions on which

discourse theory is grounded. The deployment of discourse theory is, therefore, similar to ‘applying a rule’ in the sense in which Wittgenstein (1953) understands this process, with the same rule being applied differently in different historical contexts (Howarth, 2000: 134).

The assumption of discourse theorists that there can be no single, prescriptive, universally applicable methodological approach to researching social phenomena has led to charges of irrationalism and ‘methodological anarchy’ (Habermas, 1987; Bhaskar, 1989; Geras, 1990). These criticisms, however, are based on an inaccurate and incomplete understanding of the ontological, epistemological and methodological claims made by discourse theorists. Rather than promoting methodological anarchy, discourse theorists advocate methodological flexibility. This requires the thoughtful and well considered application of the underlying tenets of discourse theory in new and original methodologies which, while they remain consistent with the underlying assumptions of discourse theory, are specific to the particular demands of the historical and social context in which the research project is situated (Howarth, 2000; cf. Hansen, 2006: 73 ff).

In this study, I examine the construction of Britain and the EU in coverage of the EU treaty reform process in five British newspapers (*The Daily Telegraph*, *The Daily Mail*, *The Sun*, *The Guardian* and *The Daily Mirror*) between 2003 and 2007. The methodology employed is a form of qualitative discourse analysis, which allows the researcher to trace the emergence and maintenance of the systems of meaning referred to as discourses. The newspaper articles gathered from the above titles will be subjected to a close reading in order to examine the way in which Britain and the EU are constructed in the newspaper coverage of the treaty reform process. I will utilise the concepts of social, political and fantasmatic logics developed by Glynos and Howarth (2007) to examine the ways in which the meanings of Britain and the EU are constructed in relation to one another.

This is necessarily an interpretative process, which requires the discourse analyst to look for evidence of these logics at work. There is no analytical matrix

through which we can run a text and get a definitive and indisputable answer as to whether the processes theorised by discourse theorists are at play within a certain text. Nor is there any software that can undertake such a task; it is a thoroughly qualitative and interpretative process. An analogy with this process of qualitative discourse analysis can be seen in the process of translation: in the same way that translation software or electronic translation devices can translate simple words or occasionally simple phrases, it is often incapable of translating entire texts or even paragraphs and sentences.

The current project attempts to examine the complex and often subtle ways in which meanings and relational identities are constructed within the relevant debates. For this reason the only appropriate approach to take is a detailed, qualitative reading of the texts selected, through the lens provided by the concepts and logics of discourse theory, by a researcher familiar at first hand with meanings and associations conveyed by the specific forms of language employed.

Consequently, no numerical coding of the texts will be undertaken, nor will any form of quantitative analysis. Instead, the close reading of the texts will be governed by a series of research questions derived from the above analysis of discourse theory and its application to the question of Britain's relationship to the EU. When analysing each newspaper article I will use the questions set out in the table below to guide my reading of the text at hand.

1	How is the meaning of <i>Britain</i> and <i>the EU</i> constructed in his article?
2	How do the signifiers <i>Britain</i> and <i>the EU</i> relate to each other in this article?
3	With which other signifiers are the signifiers <i>Britain</i> and <i>the EU</i> related?
4	Are the constructions of <i>Britain</i> and <i>the EU</i> compatible or mutually exclusive?
5	How is the concept of the nation presented in his article?
6	How are other EU member-states presented in this article? How is their relationship with the UK/ other member-states constructed?
7	What subject positions are created for British citizens to occupy in defining their national identity?

The questions above will guide the analysis of the articles selected by focusing on if (and in what way) the specific discourse theoretical logics and processes are evident in each article. This will facilitate the examination of whether it is possible to identify a specifically eurosceptic discourse of British national identity, and whether there are other competing discourses of national identity available within these debates. In so doing, it will be possible to analyse the way in which Britain and the EU are constructed as meaningful objects of discourse and the subject positions which are available for individuals to occupy within these discourses. The results of the analysis conducted can then be analysed using the concepts of social, political and fantasmatic logics set out above.

1.5 Terminology

A brief comment is in order about the terminology employed in the present study. The term Britain is central to the argument presented here yet its precise meaning in common usage is often ambiguous. Within the context of this study, I use the term Britain to mean something akin to what Ben Wellings (2002) terms Anglo-Britain. This is a specifically English construction of Britishness aimed at and English audience. In other words it refers to the use of the terms Britain by and for a specifically English audience who often fail to recognise the distinction which exists between the concepts of Englishness and Britishness (see also Gamble, 2003).

For this reason, the present study focuses not on the British print media in its truest sense, but on the London based press that is aimed at an English audience. To study the variations in the constructions of Britain, Europe and the EU which emerge in Scottish or Welsh newspapers constitutes an entire PhD in its own right and is, therefore, beyond the remit of the current project.

Although the term appears very infrequently in the media sources analysed here, I refer to 'the UK' in my analysis. For most intents and purposes the meaning of the latter is synonymous with the term 'Britain' as it is employed in the media and at times in the current project. However, given the virtual absence of the terms from

the newspaper sources, its use allows me to distinguish more clearly my voice as analyst from that of the media discourses under examination.

Similarly, the press sources analysed here make frequent reference to the term 'Europe' as a synonym for the EU. The use of the term Europe, however, often implies an account of the EU which appears to exclude the UK. For the purposes of clarity, I use quotation marks to distinguish this particular use of the terms from a more general (and more accurate) use of the terms to connote a particular cultural and geographic space of which the UK is part.

1.6 Thesis Structure

The aim of this thesis is to offer a discourse theoretical account of the construction of Britain and the EU in the debates surrounding the EU treaty reform process. As was highlighted above, it is possible to discern a eurosceptic discourse of British national identity evident mainly in the right-wing press. In addition, it is possible to discern a number of countervailing voices within the left-wing press which seek to challenge the pre-eminence of this eurosceptic discourse. The structure of the current thesis is designed to present a clear understanding of the theoretical underpinnings of this project and the application of this body of theory to the specific question at hand. I then present three chapters which outline the eurosceptic discourse in the right-wing press before moving on to examine the counter-narratives present in the left-wing press.

The decision to include three chapters on the right-wing press and only a single chapter on the left-wing press was not premeditated, but simply reflects the volume of material published in each domain and, above all, the range of argument marshalled in favour of or against the EU respectively. This results in part from the fact that there are three right-wing newspapers analysed as opposed to only two left-wing papers.

Furthermore, the coverage of the EU in the *Mirror* is very limited compared to that in the *Mail* or even the *Sun*. Consequently, the coverage of the left-wing press

is not only limited to a single chapter but focuses principally on the *Guardian*. Where the line of argument presented in the *Guardian* is supported by the coverage present in the *Mirror*, this will be acknowledged by specific references to, or supporting quotations from relevant articles. Where these are not given it can be assumed that a particular point or line of argument is absent from the *Mirror's* coverage.

The decision to focus initially on the right-wing press before moving on to examine the left-wing press was taken, in part, for the same reasons. However, the structure of the dissertation results principally from the fact that the left-wing press positions itself in opposition to the right-wing press. The eurosceptic discourse provides the predominant articulation of Britain's position in (or its relationship with) the EU. Consequently commentators in the left-wing press often position their own arguments in opposition to the former. In the *Guardian*, in particular, much of the debate surrounding the EU treaty reform process focuses on the coverage of that process in the right-wing press, and the effects this has on both public opinion and government policy. In contrast, whilst the *Mail* and the *Telegraph* contain references to the coverage of the EU by what they term the 'liberal media' (meaning principally *Guardian* and the BBC) these references are restricted to a small number of articles.

The content of the individual chapters is as follows. Chapter 2 examines the main assumptions of post-structuralist discourse theory and introduces the main concepts and logics that are employed in this study to analyse the media debates on the EU. In addition, this chapter introduces the discourse theoretical account of the subject and the nation and highlights the way in which these concepts draw on a Lacanian theory of the subject.

Chapter 3 sets out in greater detail the way in which post-structuralist theory can be deployed to research issues such as those at hand in the current project. In so doing it introduces the logics of critical social explanation developed by Jason Glynos and David Howarth (2007). In the second part of the chapter I set out and explain the choice of time-frame and the selection of articles examined within the present study.

Chapter 4 argues that the representation of the EU in the British media is informed by an underlying nationalism which sees the nation as the natural form of political community, and the nation-state, therefore, as the natural form of government. The second part of this chapter examines the further consequences of this latent nationalism, examining the representation of the EU as a forum for international bargaining between member-states. The argument presented in this part of the chapter is that EU politics is seen as a zero-sum game in which the benefits enjoyed by one state come at the expense of another. In addition, it is argued in the right-wing press that the EU is run both by and for France and its allies such as Germany, who can rely on the support of supranational institutions like the European Court of Justice (ECJ) and the European Commission to further their national agendas.

In Chapter 5, I argue that in the right-wing press the EU is often conflated with the term 'Europe' and that the latter is referred to often simply through the metonym 'Brussels.' Partly through the use of this terminology, the EU is constructed as a monolithic and internally homogenous entity which not only excludes the UK, but functions as the 'other' against which the idea of Britain is defined. Moreover, this European other is an overtly hostile and assumes the role of a colonial power attempting to gain ever greater control over Britain and its people on the path towards creating a European superstate.

In Chapter 6, I examine the construction of the British and 'European' economic models and the way in which these include elements of the themes developed in the three preceding chapters. Given the overlap with the different lines of argument developed above and the prominence of the issue of the economy in the right-wing press it is analysed in a separate chapter.

In Chapter 7, I aim to analyse the construction of Britain and Europe in the left-wing press and to examine whether a consistently pro-European discourse emerges from the titles selected. I compare and contrast the themes from the left-

wing press with those which emerge from the right-wing press, highlighting both the similarities and differences which exist between them.

2. Discourse Theory, Subjectivity & National Identity

In this chapter I will set the post-structuralist discourse theory of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe, which informs the current project. Laclau and Mouffe (1985) present a complex ontological theory of the social world and develop a set of concepts and logics which are deployed in this study to examine the structure of eurosceptic discourses of British national identity. Any discussion of this body of theory necessitates some familiarity with the highly specialised vocabulary which Laclau and Mouffe develop within their work. Consequently, the first part of the chapter is dedicated to introducing the main ontological assumptions of discourse theory (DT) and outlining the concepts and logics which they developed.

The focus of this study is on the construction of the British nation as a political community and the interpellation of citizens as national subjects. Consequently, the second part of the chapter focuses on the discourse theoretical account of the subject and sets out the relationship which is seen to exist between subjective identity and broader social structures. In the third part of the chapter I will examine the discourse theoretical account of the nation. I will then have the conceptual toolkit in place to examine, in subsequent chapters, the structure of the eurosceptic discourse of British national identity in EU treaty reform debates

2.1 Conceptual Framework

Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) post-structuralist discourse theory (DT) has its intellectual foundations in the structuralist linguistics of Ferdinand de Saussure (1974), the post-structuralism of Derrida (1978) and the Marxist concept of ideology as developed in the writing of Antonio Gramsci (1971). In addition, it draws on the insights of Michel Foucault's (1972) theory of discourse and the post-structuralist psychoanalytic theory of Jacques Lacan (1977). In Laclau's later works (1990, 1996, 2005), in which he has elaborated upon and refined many of the initial insights from his collaboration with Chantal Mouffe, the influence of Lacan comes increasingly to the fore.

The underlying assumption of discourse theory is that ‘all objects and actions are inherently meaningful and that their meaning is conferred by particular systems of significant difference’ (Howarth 2000: 101; see also Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000: 2). Consequently, the object of study for discourse theorists is the emergence, reproduction and contestation of systems of meaning known as discourses in which the identity of social objects is conferred by the differential position they occupy with that discourse (Howarth 2000: 131).

True to its roots in post-structuralism, DT rejects the idea that there is a transcendental organising principle which dictates the structure of society in the final instance. For discourse theorists, the social order we experience is not a given, objective reality but is, instead, a contingent and historically specific articulation of the social (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Howarth, 2000). In this sense, Laclau and Mouffe’s theory marks the final departure from the Marxists conception of economic determination still evident, for example, in the work of Gramsci (1971).

Although no transcendental organising principle exists to structure social relations and to institute a permanent fixation of meaning, a partial structuration of social relations and thus a partial fixation of meaning are both possible and necessary. If no order whatsoever were present within the social, then any form of social organisation or collective action would be impossible (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Laclau, 1996; 2005). DT can be understood, therefore, as an attempt to theorise the emergence and maintenance of social order – what Laclau and Mouffe term ‘objectivities’ – in the conditions of ultimate indeterminacy (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Laclau, 2005).

2.1.1 The Concept of Discourse

Laclau and Mouffe (1985) introduce the concept of a *discourse* to account for the emergence of social structures and the partial fixation of meaning they bring about. Discourses, they state, are systems of relational differences which govern the meaning of social objects. The identity of social objects results from the differential position they occupy in relation to one another within the overarching system of

meaning. Discourses function then as semi-permanent structures (or *quasi*-structures) which bring order to a particular social context.² They are, as David Howarth (2000: 104) comments, the ‘publicly available and essentially incomplete frameworks of meaning which enable social life to be conducted.’

Discourses are inherently unstable and radically incomplete (Torfing, 1999: 92). That is to say no discourse is ever able to articulate society in its entirety, domesticating all potential identity positions within a single discursive formation. Consequently, the possibility remains that any discursive formation may be undermined and subverted by those identity positions it excludes (Torfing, 1999: 85-86). Certain discourses may achieve a high level of sedimentation. However, competing discourses can always emerge to challenge even highly sedimented discursive formations. It is this radical contingency which differentiates a discourse – as a partial and semi-permanent fixation of meaning – from a transcendental structure. Discourses then can be seen as the result of a complex dialectic relationship between the logics of contingency and necessity, in which the structuring force of a discourse is able to subvert the contingency of the social by introducing a semi permanent order to the social (Laclau, 1996: 22ff; Howarth, 2000: 103).

The point must be emphasised at this stage that the concept of discourse, as it is employed by discourse theorists, differs greatly from the term discourse as it is used elsewhere within the social sciences (see Howarth, 2000: 2-4 & 116). Discourse, as it is understood within the present study, does not refer to the language used to describe an objectively given social reality, but to systems of relational identities which are constitutive of social reality. Similarly, since the meaning of objects is dependent on the organising logic of a particular discursive formation, objects and actions can have no meaning outside of discourse (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985).

² See Glynos and Howarth (2007) on the use of the term quasi-structure.

In developing their social ontology Laclau and Mouffe introduce a series of additional, highly specialised concepts which make possible a fundamental reconceptualisation of the nature of society and of politics. In the remainder of this section I shall set out the main concepts they introduce and will explain their significance within the overall framework they develop.

2.1.2 Articulation, Elements and Moments

Closely related to the concept of discourse is that of *articulation*, since it is through the process of articulation that discourses emerge. Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 105) define articulation as ‘any practice establishing a relation among elements such that their identity is modified as a result of the articulatory practice,’ while a discourse is the ‘structured totality’ that results from such articulatory practises. In the preceding quotation, we are confronted immediately with another concept of great importance to the internal logic of DT. The idea of an element is best understood alongside the related concept of a moment. In Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985: 105) own terms, the process of articulation involves the conversion of social elements into moments of a particular discourse. A moment, therefore, is a differential position within a specific discursive formation. As the meaning of social objects is purely relational, it is through their articulation as moments in a discourse that social objects achieve their identity.

Elements, by contrast, are those potential identity positions which have not (yet) been articulated within a specific discourse (Laclau and Mouffe’s 1985: 105). It is perhaps useful to think of elements as potential moments open to articulation within a certain discourse. Elements are capable of simultaneous articulation as moments of a multitude of distinct (and perhaps even contradictory) discourses, and their meaning will vary greatly from discourse to discourse. Similarly, whilst an element may be excluded from one discourse, it may be articulated as a moment of another competing discourse.

A fuller understanding of the concepts of an element may come from viewing them in the terms of post-structuralist linguistics. Elements can be thought of as ‘floating signifiers,’ elements whose meaning is overdetermined through their articulation as moments of more than one discourse and whose meaning varies from discourse to discourse (Torfing, 1999: 301). Floating signifiers can be subsumed into a potentially boundless array of discursive formations, and their precise meaning will vary according to the rules of formation of that particular discourse.

The meaning structure of each discursive formation is constructed around a central nodal point: a privileged differential position within the discourse in terms of which all other meaning is defined (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). Consequently, floating signifiers achieve their identity in relation to the nodal points of the discourses into which they are articulated.

Nodal points are the key stones on which a discourse depends for its stability and coherence. For example, within the discourse of communism, the signifiers ‘democracy’ and ‘the state’ are rearticulated in terms of the nodal point of communism, so that the ‘true’ meaning of democracy becomes ‘social democracy’ and the ideal form of the state is articulated as the dictatorship of the proletariat (Žižek, 1989: 88; see also Torfing, 1999: 98-99). The same process, it can be argued, is seen in the discourse of liberalism, in which the meanings of democracy and the state are rearticulated in terms of their relationship to rights and freedoms of the individual. Consequently, there is a rearticulation of ‘true’ democracy as liberal democracy and the state as the constitutional state.

2.1.3 Equivalence, Difference and the Limits of Discourse

The concepts introduced above describe the building blocks in terms of which discourses are constituted as systems of differential meaning organised around central nodal points. However, the preceding discussion tells only part of the story. What is missing thus far is an account of how discourses are constituted and challenged through hegemonic discursive practices. As was highlighted above the very concept of a discourse assumes the idea of incompleteness and, therefore, limits.

Without some form of limiting principle, the system of differences instituted by a particular discourse could expand to the point where it was able to domesticate all social identities. The latter would then cease to be a discourse and become instead a (universal) social structure. Articulation would no longer be possible as the identity of all social elements would be fixed in relation to all other elements as moments of the same master discourse. Consequently, an account is needed of the emergence of discourses as partial, incomplete yet internally coherent entities.

Discourse theorists deny the existence of any form of essential, pre-discursive identity intrinsic to social elements; their identities emerge instead through their articulation as objects of discourse. Consequently, the organising logic of any discourse cannot be based on some essential characteristic of the social elements it combines. Following Foucault (1972), Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 105) state that ‘a discursive formation is not unified either in the logical coherence of its elements, or in the a priori of a transcendental subject.’ Instead, they define a discourse as ‘an ensemble of differential positions’ which ‘in certain contexts of exteriority can be *signified* as a totality’ (Laclau and Mouffe 1985: 106, emphasis in original).

If the organising principle of a discourse reveals itself only in ‘certain conditions of exteriority,’ its unity is defined in terms of those identities which cannot be domesticated into its system of differences. Thus discourses, as individuated entities, exist as the collective negation of those identity positions which it excludes. For this reason, discourse theorists have come to refer to those identity positions excluded from a specific discourse as its ‘constitutive outside’ (Torfing, 1999: 299).

It is important to highlight at this stage the difference which exists within Laclau and Mouffe’s framework between individual discourses on the one hand, and the discursive (or the field of discursivity) on the other. The field of discursivity is the domain to which this irreducible surplus of meaning – necessarily excluded from a partial and incomplete discursive formation – is consigned. The discursive,

therefore, is the theoretical horizon which makes possible the emergence of these specific systems of meaning called discourses (Laclau and Mouffe, 1987: 86).

This idea of a discourse as a negation of its exterior implies a certain commonality or equivalence between the various moments of a discourse, which at the same time unites them as moment of that discourse, and separates them as a collective entity from the remainder of the discursive. There is then something other than a pure system of difference involved in the discursive construction of social identities. There is also a type of equivalence which unites individual discourses and defines them as individuated entities (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985).

The emergence of discourses is in fact the result of a complex interplay of the logics of equivalence and difference (Laclau, 2005: 77ff). On the one hand, the 'logic of difference' dictates the relational identity of moments within a discourse by highlighting the ways in which they differ from one another; on the other hand, 'logic of equivalence' subverts this system of differences by creating chains of equivalence amongst these otherwise disparate elements (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985).

The formation of chains of equivalence results in the emergence of discourses as coherent and identifiable entities that can structure the identity of those social elements articulated as moments of that discourse. Similarly, by subverting the system of differences which exists between the moments of a discourse, the logic of equivalence creates a strict distinction between a discourse and its discursive exterior.

The logic of equivalence also highlights the crucial importance of nodal points in the formation of discourses. The unifying equivalence of a discourse may be expressed solely in terms of the relationship of the various moments of that discourse to the central nodal point. Since the logic of equivalence is constructed in opposition to those identities which it excludes, the nodal point can be thought of as an empty signifier which symbolizes the negation of all that is excluded from the discourse its structures.

This in turn explains the central importance of the category of antagonism in Laclau and Mouffe's social ontology. The production of a discourse structured around an empty signifier requires the simultaneous production of an antagonistic and incompatible equivalential chain offering an alternative articulation of society (Laclau, 2005 83-4).

2.1.4 Hegemony

Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 112) state that any discourse 'is constituted as an attempt to dominate the field of discursivity, to arrest the flow of differences, to construct a centre.' Thus, discourses can be seen as political projects, competing to bring order and stability to a social world devoid of any transcendental organising force. Discourses compete with one another to become the dominant system of meaning within their discursive environment and it is this competition which, for discourse theorists, is the essence of politics.

Laclau and Mouffe (1985) account for the nature of political struggle between rival discourses with reference to the concepts of hegemony and hegemonic practices, which they adapt from the work of Antonio Gramsci (1971). Hegemonic practices involve 'the linking together of different identities and political forces into a common project, and the creation of new social orders from a variety of dispersed elements' (Howarth, 200: 109). A successful hegemonic project, therefore, is one which is able to domesticate a whole variety of disparate identity positions into a single discursive formation and provide a surface of inscription for a wide array of competing demands (Torfing, 1999: 101). In so doing, it can achieve a position of discursive predominance in which it comes to determine what it is and isn't possible to say within a certain discursive context.

A hegemonic discourse, therefore, is one whose values, assumptions and language take on the appearance of self-evidence and of permanence. It becomes the 'common-sense' that governs the way people talk and think about the world around

them and becomes generally accepted as the undeniable or unquestioned ‘truth’ about the world. For this reason the construction of hegemonic projects has been equated by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) with the construction of competing *objectivities*.

However, this account of hegemony as pre-eminence does not fully exhaust the significance of this concept within the social ontology of DT. In his recent work, Laclau (1996; 2005) has further elucidated the relationship between the concept of hegemony and the production of social objectivities. The achievement of hegemony is synonymous not only with discursive pre-eminence, but with the ability of a specific discursive project to represent what Laclau (1996: 43) terms ‘an absent communitarian fullness’ through the production of empty signifiers capable of symbolising the latter.

As will be argued below, the signifier which most readily lends itself to performing this hegemonic function in modern democratic societies is the empty signifier ‘nation.’ Consequently rival discursive projects compete to hegemonise the signifier of the nation, filling it out with a specific ontic content. In so doing, a political project is able to present its narrow, sectional demands as synonymous with those of the nation or the demands of the nation in general. As Laclau (1996: 43) comments:

A class or group is considered to be hegemonic when it is not closed in a narrow corporatist perspective, but presents itself as realising the broader aims either of emancipating or ensuring order for wider masses of the population

The success of any hegemonic project depends, therefore, on the extent to which it is able to mask its own contingency and take on the appearance of permanence and necessity. Successful hegemonic discourses, which are able to maintain their position of pre-eminence can become deeply *sedimented* to the extent that are treated as objective ‘truths’ about the social world. Consequently, the ability of competing discourses to challenge them, and ultimately to dislodge them from their position of pre-eminence by bringing about a rearticulation of the prevailing

social order, can appear virtually impossible. The hegemony of neo-liberal discourses, for instance, have led to the assumption amongst many politicians and scholars that there is simply 'no other way' than the neo-liberal agenda and that society must inevitably be restructured to meet the demands of this economic model.

However, the sedimentation of discourses should not be confused with their necessity or permanence. The potential always exists within the ontological framework of DT for the radical re-articulation of even the most successful and highly sedimented discourses. The existence of competing, dissenting voices such as, for instance, those in the anti-globalisation and anti-capitalist protest movements, highlight the inability of the neo-liberal discourse to fully articulate the social. There are certain identities that simply cannot be articulated within this hegemonic discourse and which are instead articulated into the rival discourses.

The existence of a plurality of competing discourses in the social means that the possibility of a shift in the existing status quo can never be completely closed off. No matter how sedimented the hegemonic discourse becomes, its ultimate contingency is unavoidable. It is reliant solely upon the constant rearticulation of its hegemony. Despite their longevity and their apparent self-evidence, discourses are always capable of rearticulation and dissolution. For example, the hegemonic discourse of communism in Eastern Europe appeared during the mid to late 1980's to have reached such a level of sedimentation that its (permanent) survival was assumed and its sudden collapse totally unforeseen in the East, as well as in the West. Yet, by the end of the decade the discourses of communism had collapsed more spectacularly than anyone could have predicted. They were replaced throughout the Eastern Bloc by the discourse of liberal democracy. This demonstrates the possibility of substantive rearticulation of social elements regardless of their level of sedimentation.

2.1.5 *The Discursive and the Non-Discursive*

DT is often criticised for its failure to take account for the relationship between the discursive and non-discursive realms of the social. However, Laclau and Mouffe (1985: 107) deny that there is any meaningful distinction between the discursive and extra-discursive realms. Whilst it is the case that some meaning (or potential meaning) will necessarily be excluded from any given discourse (*qua* system of meaning), it does not follow that meaning can exist outside of the discursive in its entirety. It is only within discourse that social objects achieve any kind of meaning and that any form of social order is possible. Consequently, within Laclau and Mouffe's conceptual framework, the discursive becomes coterminous with the social.

This assertion has, however, led to the mistaken conclusion that discourse theorists deny the existence of a material world outside of discourse. This criticism usually consists in the mistaken claim that DT is either idealist, reducing social reality to human thought, or textualist, reducing the social world to language (see Howarth, 2000: 111 ff; Torfing, 1999: 94).

Laclau and Mouffe (1987: 82) make it clear in their writing that the status of social objects as objects of discourse does not in any way put in doubt their material existence. Indeed, far from questioning the existence of a material world external to thought, they assert the material nature of discourse. Their claim is instead that physical entities have no meaning outside of discourse. As Laclau and Mouffe state (1985: 108; my emphasis):

The fact that every object is constituted as an object of discourse has absolutely nothing to do with whether there is a world external to thought, or with the realism/ idealism opposition. An earthquake or the falling of a brick is an event that certainly exists, in the sense that it occurs here and now, independently of my will. But whether their specificity as objects is constructed in terms of 'natural phenomena' or 'expressions of the wrath of God,' depends upon the structure of a discursive field. What is denied is not that *such objects exist externally to thought*, but the rather different assertion

that they could constitute themselves as objects outside any discursive conditions of emergence.

In other words, whilst it is not through discourse that material objects come into being, it is only through discourse that the material reality of the world is able to achieve a meaning.

Similarly, it should be clear from the discussion above that the term ‘discourse’ as employed by Laclau and Mouffe (1985) refers not to language in use, but to a broader field of meaningful practices comprised of semi-permanent social structures. This confusion perhaps arises because the use of the term in this context differs from both its everyday uses and those found elsewhere within the social sciences. As David Howarth comments (2000: 116) Laclau and Mouffe ‘creatively misapply’ the term discourse to refer not to a purely linguistic realm, but to a differential system of meaning, comprising both linguistic and non-linguistic elements, in which the identity of objects is constructed. Consequently, both claims of textualism and idealism can be set aside.

2.2 Discourse Theory and the Subject

In the previous section, I set out the underlying ontological assumptions of DT and presented the discourse theoretical account of the formation of what Laclau and Mouffe term of social ‘objectivities.’ The current section will consider the account of the subject offered by DT. In the same way that social objects are constructed and achieve meaning only within orders of discourse, so the identity of the individual subjects emerges with the context of hegemonic discursive practices. Before embarking on an analysis of Laclau and Mouffe’s theory of the subject, however, it is necessary to look at the influence on their thinking of the psychoanalyst Jacques Lacan.

Lacanian thought was a crucial influence on the development of *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985) and, in particular, on Laclau’s subsequent work on the nature of politics and the role of political subjectivity. Lacan’s work represents an

advance on classical Freudian approaches to psychoanalysis through the incorporation of structuralist and post-structuralist thought into the theory of the mind. It is this common grounding in post-structuralism which creates the link between Lacanian psychoanalysis and Laclau and Mouffe's discourse theory. Having introduced the main tenets of Lacanian theory, I will then be able to set out the discourse theoretical account of the subject which informs the present study.

2.2.1 Lacan and the Subject

Lacan was strongly influenced by the structuralism of Saussure and the subsequent deconstructivist critique of Saussurean linguistics and it is through this lens that Lacan critically engages with the writing of Freud, introducing to the vocabulary of psychoanalysis the concept of the subject which was absent from Freud's work (Evans, 1996: 195). Lacan differentiates the category of the subject not only from the Freudian ego but also from the essentialist conceptions of subjectivity found within the western philosophical tradition. The development of the Lacanian subject marks a clear departure from the Cartesian notion of an autonomous, self-transparent consciousness, or *cogito*, to which Lacan makes extensive reference throughout his career (Evans, 1996: 195-6). Rather than a positively given consciousness with a fully constituted identity, the Lacanian subject is characterised by its radical incompleteness and its alienation from itself (Fink, 1995)

It is hard to do justice to the complexity and inherent ambiguity of Lacan's conceptual vocabulary in a project of this magnitude, not least because the concepts employed by Lacan developed and evolved throughout his long career (Evans, 1996; Fink, 1995). Nevertheless, some understanding of Lacan's theory of psychological development is necessary to fully appreciate the discourse theoretical conception of the subject and the broader theory of the social world it proposes.

The concept of splitting, or the split ego (*Ich-Spaltung*), was already present in work of Freud (Stavrakakis, 1999: 16). However, for Lacan the idea of the split takes a far more prominent role and is something which is constitutive of subjectivity

itself (Lacan, 1995: 268). It refers to the radical alienation of the subject from its own essential being through its integration into society and the world of language. Psychological development, for Lacan, is driven by the attempt to overcome this split, alienated form of subjectivity and to achieve a stable and fully reconciled identity. Lacan introduces three main concepts, or registers, which he employs throughout his writing, to articulate the process of human psychological development: the Real³, the symbolic and the imaginary.

The Lacanian Real refers to a place at the centre of our being that eludes signification. It is the location of a primal, pre-symbolic enjoyment (or *jouissance* in Lacan's terms). It is the realm of a mythical unity prior to the alienation brought about by entry into the imaginary and symbolic phases of development. Before progressing onto the world of the symbolic with the acquisition of language, the child is introduced to the world of the imaginary in which it becomes visually aware of the presence of the Other⁴, initially in the form of the mother with whose image it is first confronted (Evans 1996). In the mirror phase, the child becomes aware for the first time of her/his own physicality through the specular image.

The awareness of the image of the self and the (m)other is the stage at which the ego begins to emerge within the child. For Lacan, the ego is understood as an image in which we recognise ourselves, and corresponds, therefore, to the sedimentation of idealised images internalised during the mirror stage (Stavrakakis, 1999: 17-18). The reliance of the ego on external images, however, means that from the very beginning the child is dependent on an alienating exteriority for her/his own self-image. This undermines the very idea of an autonomous ego as the basis of a fully reconciled, stable subjectivity (Stavrakakis, 1999: 18). The mirror stage – the realm of the visual – is incapable of providing the individual with a stable identity. It

³ I follow Slavoj Žižek (1993 *inter alia*) in using a capital letter here to differentiate the specific use of the term 'Real' by Lacan.

⁴ A capital letter is used here to represent the Lacanian category *Autre*, and reflects the use of capital letter by Lacan in the original French versions of his seminar books. The term 'the big Other' is sometimes referred to as 'the Other' or 'the big other' by certain authors (see Evans, 1996 132-3). These terms are, therefore, to be read as synonyms.

is hoped, therefore, that this role can be fulfilled by the realm of linguistic representation instead (Stavrakakis, 1999: 18).

With the advent of language, the child is thrown into the realm of the symbolic and it is at this stage which the subject fully emerges. Whilst in the imaginary phase the child attempts to carve out an identity for itself through visual images, in the symbolic identity is sought in language through a process of identification with the ‘socially *available* discursive constructions such as ideologies’ which are capable of providing an identity (Stavrakakis, 1999: 36, emphasis in original).

Although the experience of the Real is beyond symbolisation, it is always present in the symbolic through its very absence. There is always a trace of the Real lingering within the subject which it remembers and longs to experience again. It is the desire for a return to this primal state of unity before the split, to experience again the *jouissance* of the Real, which leads the subject to yearn for a fully constituted identity. In the imaginary and symbolic phases, the subject attempts to construct a fully constituted identity for itself through identification with the world around it and the structurally predetermined identity positions that are available to it.

The subject, reminded of the absent fullness of the Real, is alienated from itself through its immersion in the field of the imaginary and the symbolic. The traces of the Real in the field of the symbolic fuel the hope that, through identification with certain social objects, the subject will be able to achieve the fully constituted identity for which it yearns. From a post-structuralist perspective, however, identification with the object implies identification with that object *qua* discursive construction. It is identification with the signifier. An understanding of the subject then is indistinguishable from an understanding of effects of social discourses and of language on the subject (Copjec, 1994).

2.2.2 The Lacanian Object

It was argued above that the Lacanian subject, lacking a fully constituted identity, seeks to construct an identity for itself through a process of identification with available symbolic objects or signifiers. Identification with the object, however, is unable to produce a stable or fully constituted identity for the 'subject of the signifier' (Stavrakakis, 1999: 20). The reason for this is that the social objects with which the subject identifies are themselves lacking, and so cannot offer the stable identity the subject seeks. As was argued above, for post-structuralists there is no transcendental master signifier structuring the field of discourse and ensuring the permanent fixation of the signifier to the signified. Only semi-permanent, partial fixations of meaning around a transient nodal point are possible, and so discourses are permanently open to the possibility of rearticulation.

From this perspective, the signifier of the object is not imbued with any positive identity. Its identity is instead purely relational and depends upon the discursively articulated system of differences structuring the relations between signifiers. However, there is always something missing from the structure – an ultimate foundation or transcendental signifier in the order of language – which means it will always remain radically incomplete. The object in which identity is sought is then characterised by the same constitutive lack we find in the subject. The subject then is unable to achieve a stable identity for itself through identification with objects that are themselves inherently unstable and lacking. The socio-symbolic structure that guarantees the identity of the subject through the construction of differential identities also has the character of an empty space rather than a solid foundation. Subjective identities constructed in terms of an unstable social order can lead only to the constant deferral of meaning.

It is interesting to note the equivalence in Lacan's writing between the object and the social structure. The Lacanian concept of the 'big Other' connotes both the other in the sense of object and also in the sense of structure since the identity of the object is dependent on the structure for its identity (Evans, 1996: 132-3).

It is possible, however, to take the argument a step further. Not only does the distinction between structure and object break down within Lacan's post-structuralist conception of the world, but also the strict dichotomy between the subject on the one hand, and the object/structure on the other. As was argued above, entry into the symbolic entails the unavoidable imbrication of the object in the subject. However, since the object is also inherently unstable, a space opens for some form of agency on the part of the identifying subject. Not only does the structure constitute the identity of the subject through the identity positions it opens up to it, but the process of identification on the part of the structure leads to a shift or change in the structure itself. The parallels with the Laclau and Mouffian category of articulation, set out above, are obvious. Similarly, there is connection between Lacan's theory of subjectivity and Laclau's (1990) conception of political subjectivity which will be discussed below.

2.2.3 Lacan and the Concept of Fantasy

The construction of a fully constituted subjective identity through identification with the big Other is then ultimately impossible, and results not in an identity in the fullest sense of the word but an identification (Stavrakakais, 1999). However, it could be argued that identity is impossible in another, purely Lacanian sense. Not only will the 'identity' resulting from object identification be inherently unstable, but it is also incapable of bringing about the reconciliation of the subject with itself. In other words, it will never be able to overcome the fundamental alienation experienced by the loss of the Real. The subject is driven to identify by the desire to recapture the absent fullness and the primal *jouissance* of the Real, yet this process of identification is ultimately futile. The subject can never be fully reconciled with itself. Since the subject's Real identity this can never be symbolised, it will remain forever out of reach. The question arises then as to why the subject continues to in vain to identify itself with the world of the signifier?

The answer to this is twofold. On the one hand, there is what we can term the structuralist explanation that whilst the subject cannot achieve its Real identity, it requires an identity of some kind and this can only be achieved in the symbolic through the process of identification. A parallel can perhaps be drawn here with Laclau and Mouffe's (1985) understanding of society. Society, in the sense of a fully constituted and all inclusive system of differential identities, they argue, is an impossible object and can never be achieved. All that is possible is certain society effects: incomplete and contingent attempts to construct a social order, which can never bring about the (permanent) ordering of society. Nevertheless, the idea of society is not only impossible, but also necessary to the construction of (incomplete) social objectivities. It is only the illusion of society that enables the construction of a social order (see also Laclau, 1990; 2005). Without this fiction that a given order is the final, complete manifestation of society in its natural form, the reconciliation of the social with itself, then any attempt at creating such an order would be futile. Without the idea of *the* ideal society, therefore, we would lose not only the utopian fiction, but the possibility of any social order at all.

However, in order to fully understand the drive to identify we must relate it to the concept of desire and, more specifically, the desire the subject feels for the unity of the Real. And this fullness is always closely associated with the concept of *jouissance* (Forrester, 1990). Thus the subject desires the primal enjoyment of the Real, the trace of which remains within it (Fink, 1995). Desire in turn is closely associated with the concept of fantasy. It is through fantasmatic investment that certain signifiers come to represent the primal *jouissance* of the Real within the symbolic order. This opens up the possibility that the lost unity of the Real can somehow be recovered in the symbolic (Stavrakakis, 1999). However, the object of desire once realised is never able to satisfy the subject's yearning, being only a pale imitation of what was lost and can never be recovered.

From the preceding discussion, it should be clear that the object of Lacanian psychoanalysis is not the subject itself but what it is lacking, and the subsequent attempt to fill this lack through identification (Stavrakakis, 1999: 36-37). Equally,

the strict distinction between subject and object begins to break down within Lacan's ontology. It no longer makes sense to talk of an individual subject in isolation in the way in which it was possible for Freud to talk about the emergence of the ego (Stavrakakis, 1999: 36-38). The subject is dependent on the social context and the symbolic order in which she is situated, yet the structure itself is inherently unstable and is open to subversion by the agency of the subject. For this reason, an adequate understanding of subjectivity cannot be achieved merely through an analysis of the subject in isolation, or through an essentialist reduction of the subject to the effects of certain external material conditions or its relationship to an objective social reality. We must instead search for more nuanced conception of subjectivity and agency which can account for the mutual constitution of subject and object, structure and agent. It is in the discourse theory of Laclau and Mouffe, I argue, that such an account is to be found.

2.2.4 Laclau and Mouffe's Conception of the Subject

Discourse theory gives rise to two related, yet ultimately distinct, concepts which deal with the category of the subject: *subject positions* and the *political subjectivity*. In *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* (1985: 115 ff), only the former is evident and the term subject appears to be synonymous with the subject positions occupied within a discursive formation. A subject position is a differential identity within a specific discursive formation whose identity, like that of social objects, is defined in relation to all other identities articulated within that discursive formation (the logic of difference) and the overarching system of meaning which constitutes the unifying principle of that discourse (the logic of equivalence). The subject for Laclau and Mouffe at this stage of their thinking, therefore, cannot be the origin of social relations, but is instead an effect of hegemonic articulatory practise. It is the subject of the structure.

A variety of different subject positions are articulated within each discursive framework, which confer certain identities on the individuals who identify with them. Subjects then achieve their identity from occupying these positions and

assuming the role defined for them by these differential identities. Individuals may occupy several subject positions simultaneously within in competing discursive formations (Howarth, 2000; Howarth and Stavrakakis, 2000). Similarly, it is equally possible for an individual to occupy multiple subject positions within the same discourse. Within competing discourses the subject positions occupied by an individual will be (at least potentially) contradictory and incompatible with one another. However, the multiple subject positions occupied by the same individual within a particular discursive formation will be complimentary to the extent that they are able to be subsumed within a single system of differences and in reference to the same nodal point.

The notion of the subject as subject position is, however, a very static and passive concept, which hollows out to a large extent the concept of articulation. The subject appears to be reduced to a function of the structure and is stripped of any form of agency. If subjectivity is governed exclusively by the structural position into which that subject is articulated, then it is impossible for the subject to become a political agent (in the sense in which Laclau and Mouffe use the term) and to subvert the prevailing social structure. Consequently, the possibility of a re-articulation of the prevailing discursive structure subsides. The structure begins to appear highly sedimented and resistant to change and the subject as subject position becomes indistinguishable from the structure (Laclau, 1990: 60-61). They are one and the same since the identity of the subject is determined by the structure, and the structure is not open to subversion by the subject.

This type of sedimentation means it becomes impossible to distinguish the concept of a discourse, from that of a structure in the fullest sense of the term. DT is then confronted with the same criticisms to which structuralist theory is open; that whilst it is able to theorise the status quo, it is unable to conceptualise social change or the role of political agency in subverting social structures.

This rigidly structuralist conception of the subject is clearly out of keeping with the post-structuralism espoused by Laclau and Mouffe. Whilst they maintain

that some form of structuration is essential if any form of social order is to be possible, they insist that hegemonic discursive structures are inherently unstable and open to change. It is the contingency of discursive formations which differentiates them from the concept of structure.

One possible response to this is that, although the subject positions internal to a given structure are dictated purely by the differential identity constructed within that discursive formation, no discourse is able to structure the social in its entirety. There will always be certain identities which are mutually exclusive and cannot coexist within a single system of differences because they fundamentally contradict one another. Those identities which are excluded from a given discourse form its constitutive exterior, which is both its condition of possibility and, at the same time, a source of instability. It could be argued, therefore, that this radical exterior is the point from which critique, and ultimately social change, is possible. In other words, whilst critique from within a given discourse is impossible it can come from without.

On the surface, this seems a plausible account of potential social change and one which is clearly in keeping with Laclau and Mouffe's conception of social relations as inherently antagonistic. Hegemonic discourses are undermined from without by those elements unable to achieve an identity within them. Through the logics of equivalence and difference, these elements are able to form rival, competing discursive formations which offer a different conception of society and challenge the predominant discursive formation. However, a radical rearticulation of the prevailing social order involves not simply the assertion of those identities excluded from the hegemonic discourse, but also the *re*articulation of those internal to the hegemonic discourse by bringing about a dislocation in its signifying chains. Identities within the existing social structure – the moments of the hegemonic discourse – must be converted into floating signifiers and rearticulated in terms of the emerging, rival hegemonic order.

Some identity positions internal to the old hegemonic discourse will be excluded from the new order, but many will be rearticulated – with their identity

altered to varying degrees – as moments of the new discourse, in which they will occupy a new differential position dependent upon the organisational logic of that discourse. In Saussurean terms, the identity achieved by signifiers in the new hegemonic discourse will be different from those connoted by the same signifier within the previous hegemonic discourse. This is equally true of social objects and practices as it is of subject positions.

What appears to be missing from the account then is an understanding of how such a rearticulation of the hegemonic discourse comes about and how the rearticulation of subject identities is involved in this process. Such an account is found in Laclau's later work (1990, 1996; Laclau and Zac, 1994) in which he develops the concept of 'political subjectivity' to account for the role of human agents in the process of social change. Laclau's engagement with Lacan is evident in his consideration of the effects of contingency on the category of the subject. How are we to think about the subject when confronted with the ultimate indeterminacy of the object/ structure? The conception of subject as subject position present in *Hegemony and Socialist Strategy* is supplemented by a more substantive theorisation of the subject as a political agent.

Given the failure of discourses to structure society in its entirety and thus to permanently fix all social identities, the subject must act to construct an identity by identifying itself with certain political projects or ideologies (Howarth, 2000: 109; see also Laclau, 1990). Moreover, the subject, in constructing its identity through an active process of identification, also subverts and alters the structure within which it is situated. The subject then is not simply the effect of the structure, consigned to occupy certain subject positions, but is also its (partial) cause. It is this active form of agency – the subject of identification rather than structured identity – that Laclau calls political subjectivity (Laclau, 1990: 60-61). The subject thus understood is the locus of a decision to identify itself with certain discursively constructed identity positions (Laclau, 1990: 60).

That is not to say, however, that the decision is purely voluntaristic, or that an infinite array of potential identities is open to the subject. Whilst the structure may be lacking or unstable, it is not absent. The decision, the process of identification, always takes place within a specific context, within a discursive formation which places constraints on the agency of the subject. There are some decisions which are simply not open to the subject or which it is unable to make. The extent to which a radical rearticulation of identity is possible will depend on the stability and sedimentation of the hegemonic discursive formation. For this reason, the decision, the moment of the subject as political agent is inextricably linked to the category of dislocation.

The antagonistic nature of social relations means that the structuring discursive formation is always susceptible to dislocatory events: phenomena which can not be subsumed by or domesticated within a particular discursive formation (Torfing, 1999: 148). Dislocation is the embodiment of the lack in the structure, the very point at which the structure's contingency becomes visible (Laclau, 1990: 60). It is in times of dislocation in the discursive order that the subject is called upon to construct its identity in relation to one of the available discursive formations competing for hegemony. Since this decision requires the subject to choose a certain option, this automatically implies the rejection of other equally possible alternatives that it could have taken. Since such decisions will ultimately decide the form of the reconstituted social order, this act of exclusion is an exercise of power which is constitutive of society (Laclau, 1990: 60).

It is only in the context of a radical structural undecidability that a decision, in the true sense of the word, is possible. If all identity was positively given by the structure, there would be no room left for the decision, for the outcome would already be predetermined either by the material conditions in which the decision takes place (as in Marx) or as a result of the unfolding logic of some form of ultimate rationality present in the world (as in the Hegelian dialectic). In either case, the position of the subject within the emerging social order would have been already decided (Laclau, 1996). The possibility of the decision, by contrast, implies that there

is a need for the decision as a constitutive act brought about by the lack of any such determinism in the structure (Laclau, 1990: 60). The decision then is the trace of the contingent within the social, the point at which the failure of the hegemonic discursive formation to fully determine social relations becomes apparent (Laclau 1990: 39-41; 60-61). Since the moment of decision is the moment in which political subjectivity comes alive, the subject is nothing other than the 'pure form of the structure's dislocation,' the ultimate undecidability of the structure (Laclau, 199: 60). It is the subject of lack in the fullest sense.

In summary, the subject, in the sense of political subjectivity, is best understood as the trace of contingency within the prevailing social objectivity. It is the moment of dislocation and decision which is both partially determined by, and constitutive of, discursive structures. The greater the dislocated within the structure, the more the field of decision, and thus the field of the subject, will expand (Laclau, 1990: 39-40). The effect of the decision is to redefine not only the identity of the subject, but of the structure too. Each assertion of identity by the subject necessarily leads to a rearticulation of its relationship with the discursive structures in which it obtains its identity. In times of great social sedimentation, however, when the contingency of the structure is most hidden and the myth of permanence and objectivity is at its strongest, the subject is reduced to subject position: the collection of partially fixed identity positions which it occupies. In light of these conclusions about the nature of subjectivity within the ontology of discourse theory, we are now able to assess the significance this has for our understanding of society and politics in general and the phenomenon of euroscepticism in particular.

2.3 Discourse Theory & Nationalism

Jacob Torfing (1999: 192) argues that, for discourse theorists, the concept of nationalism refers to:

a certain articulation of the empty signifier of the nation, which itself becomes the nodal point in the political discourse of modern democracy and generally functions as a way of symbolising an absent communitarian fullness.

To claim that the nation functions as the nodal point in the discourse of modern democracy is to attribute to it a crucial function in structuring social relations in western democratic societies. The nation becomes the central reference point around which competing political projects are structured and in terms of which political demands are articulated. The call for a certain type of healthcare or economic policy, for example, will be made in terms of the national interest or the good of the nation.

From a discourse theoretical perspective, therefore, the function of that nation is not only to structure social relations, but to provide a source of political legitimacy for the exercise of power. This echoes Billig's (1995) argument that 'banal' nationalism is the ideology underlying western democratic societies. According to Billig (1995), modern societies are constructed as national societies and claims to political legitimacy are made in reference to the concept of 'the nation' and 'the national interest.' Ben Wellings (2008) goes even further in seeing the legitimization of power as the defining feature of nationalism in the modern world.

Torring (1999: 192) explains the function of the nation in modern political communities with reference to the work of Claude Lefort. Lefort (1988: 16-7) argues that power in pre-democratic feudal societies is embodied in the person of the prince, who legitimates the exercise of this power with reference to some form of divine ordinance. It is beholden to the prince to mediate between the god and the citizenry. Following what Lefort terms the 'Democratic Revolution' (Torring 1999: 192), the concentration of power in a single figure is no longer possible.

With the dissolution of an external authority provided by god, the unity and stability of society begins to disintegrate. However, the image of unity and completeness is necessary if social order is to be maintained. It is necessary, therefore, for competing political projects to suture the emerging divisions and to offer an articulation of society as a stable and fully-constituted entity around a central nodal point such as the nation. In modern democratic societies, therefore, the nation replaces god as the ultimate source of political authority.

There is a plurality of competing articulations of the national mission, which attempt to hegemonise the signifier 'nation' and to speak in the name of society writ large (Torfing, 1999: 192; cf Billig, 1995: 87). Political projects seek to establish 'an expansive hegemony' which is able to legitimise its authority with reference to 'the nation' and 'the people' (Torfing 1999: 193). Consequently, the latter function as surfaces of inscription for the various (disparate) social demands which are articulated as moments of the hegemonic discourse (Torfing, 199: 193).

Laclau's (1990; 1996) concept of the empty signifier is crucial to the argument set out here. The empty signifier is at one and the same time a moment in the hegemonic discursive formation and the signifier of the fundamental lack in the social structure. In Heideggerian terms, it has both a specific ontic content and an underlying ontological function. For example, the emergence of nationalist discourses described above involves the filling out of the empty signifiers of 'nation' and 'people' with a substantive ontic content, defining the nation and attributing to it certain values and characteristics. However, the signifier 'nation' also assumes the ontological function of suturing together the disparate elements of nationalist discourse into a chain of equivalence and, consequently, provides the conditions of possibility for the emergence of social order. It is the keystone on which the prevailing social order depends and which structures the relationship between other social elements.

In order to fulfil this structuring function, however, an empty signifier such as 'the nation' must take on the appearance of universality. It must present an account of the social world that appears to be both necessary and permanent. It must cover over the traces of its own contingency through what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) term ideological practices. In so doing, a discursive project can claim to be not simply one account of society amongst many, but the definitive account of the social which is able to fully reconcile all available identity positions and is, therefore, beyond contestation and change. The purpose of all discursive projects, therefore, is to mask over the ultimate undecidability and contingency of the social world and to satisfy

our desire for a complete and fully reconciled social order by hiding from us the ultimate impossibility of this goal.

2.3.1 The Power of Nationalist Discourses

Nationalist discourses function by presenting an account of the social world in which 'society' is equated with 'nation.' The strength of this discourse, and its ability to structure the social world, depends on this account of the social world assuming the appearance of necessity or 'common sense' in the way described above. As Billig (1995) argues, the logic of nationalism is also able to present itself as a universal theory of the political which situates the nation in a world of similar nations. Nations are, therefore, presented as natural, universally present political communities. Any alternative articulations of political community, which subvert the principle of nationalism in anyway are denounced as false constructions, which go against universal principles of human nature represented by nationalism.

For the discourse theorists, however, there is no such thing as a natural or necessary political community, only contingent semi-permanent articulations of the social world, which must be constantly reproduced through ideological practices. Whilst nationalist discourses have reached an extremely high level of sedimentation and may take on the appearance of necessity, they remain discourses nonetheless and remain open to the possibility of a radical rearticulation of the social world. Another nodal-point may come to replace the nation as the term around which all other political discourses are structured. It is necessary, therefore, for the discourse theorists to account for the continued force of nationalist discourses.

The argument presented here is that the affective power of nationalist discourses can be understood in terms of the Lacanian conception of the subject discussed in the previous chapter. Lacan's three orders of the Real, the imaginary, and the symbolic were introduced along with the concepts of identification, fantasy and desire which inform discourse theoretical account of the subject and, in particular, the concept of political subjectivity developed by Laclau (1990; 1996). It is unnecessary at this juncture to re-examine Lacan's conception of the subject in its

entirety, however, certain aspects will be recapitulated below as far as they are relevant to the development of the argument presented here.

Zizek argues that Lacanian theory provides a conceptual architecture with which to analyse the emergence and maintenance of these affective ties between subject and nation. It is inadequate, he claims, to explain the prevalence and force of nationalist discourse as a 'pure discursive effect,' since such an account lacks sufficient 'substance' to account for the strength of feeling generated by nationalism, and the enduring loyalty felt by individuals to the national cause (Zizek, 1993: 202; cf Anderson, 1991: 141; Jenkins and Sofos, 1996: 11; Billig, 1995: 18). The missing 'substance' that Zizek sees in purely discursive accounts of nationalism is the primordial, pre-symbolic enjoyment which Lacan terms *jouissance*; it is only in terms of *jouissance* that we are fully able to understand the power of nationalist discourses.

Following Zizek, Stavrakakis (2005: 76) also argues that the discursive construction of the nation as a nodal point within a particular discourse is, in and of itself, insufficient to explain the prevalence and the strength of nationalist sentiment and must be supported by 'an affective investment' with the nation. 'Nationalism,' he continues, 'works through people's hearts, nerves and gut' (Stavrakakis, 2005: 76). Consequently, it is necessary to supplement the discourse theoretical account of the emergence and structure of nationalist discourses with a theory capable of explaining the affective pull of these discourses on national subjects and the emotional investment of the latter in these discourses.

The attempt to construct the social world as a unified and fully-reconciled totality is central to the discourse theoretical account of society and nationalism. By adding the additional layer of psychoanalytic theory to our analysis we are able to comprehend a deeper, psychological need for a unified and harmonious society (Stavrakakis, 2005; Butler, Laclau and Zizek, 2000; Laclau, 1996).

It will be recalled from the discussion above that the Lacanian subject is characterised by a constitutive lack. On its entry into the symbolic order – the realm of the word and the signifier – the lacking subject becomes alienated from its own identity. It is compelled to construct an identity for itself through a process of identification with the various subject positions available for it in the discursive context in which it is situated. This lack in the subject manifests itself in a yearning for lost *jouissance* and the desire to recapture the absent fullness of the Real. As Stavrakakis (1999: 42) comments, the subject experiences ‘a lack of *jouissance*, the lack of a pre-symbolic, Real enjoyment which is always posited as something lost, as a lost fullness.’

Identification, however, is never able to provide the subject with a fully-constituted identity (Stavrakakis, 2005: 71). The social order in which an identity *qua* identification is sought – the big Other in Lacan’s terms – is also lacking and is, therefore, unable to provide the subject with the identity for which it yearns. At this stage, the relationship between the alienated, lacking subject and the broader social structure becomes clear. The attempt to reconstruct society as a unified and self-reconciled entity – to produce what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) describe as ‘society’ – is inextricably linked to the desire of the subject for a fully constituted identity. For only a fully constituted society in which all social antagonism is eradicated, and in which all identity positions can find articulation in an exhaustive and unified relational totality, is identity (as opposed to identification) possible.

The subject then is faced with the impossibility of achieving a fully-constituted identity and, in so doing, recapturing the lost *jouissance* of the Real. It is in this light that the full significance of the concept of fantasy in the Lacan’s theory becomes apparent. Fantasy is the means by which the impossibility of society and thus of identity is masked over and, at the same time, the process of identification is driven on. Since the ultimate impossibility of a fully-constituted identity is obscured, the desire to seek our identity through a process of identification with the prevailing social order persists. As Stavrakakis (1999: 46) comments:

If the human condition is marked by a quest for a lost/ impossible enjoyment, fantasy ‘offers the promise of an encounter with this precious *jouissance*, an encounter which is fantasised as covering over the lack in the Other and, consequently, as filling the lack in the subject.’

At the root of fantasy, therefore, is the desire for closure and stability in the symbolic (or discursive) order. The image of a fully-constituted society is an enduring and frequently recurring motif in fantasmatic construction of the social, which provides the underpinning for numerous political projects. To quote Stavrakakis (1999: 52) once more:

From millenarianism to the *Communist Manifesto* and up to the Green ideology, we know that every political promise is supported by a reference to a lost state of harmony, unity and fullness, a reference to a pre-symbolic real which most political projects aspires to bring back.

Different political projects attempt to construct a harmonious and fully constituted social objectivity, but in differing terms and centred around different nodal points (see Laclau, 2005). Nationalism, it is argued here, represents another attempt to mask the lack in the ‘big Other’ – and in so doing the lack in the subject – with reference to a mythical communitarian fullness organised around the signifiers of ‘the nation’ and ‘the people.’ In the following section it will be argued that the construction of nationalist discourses require the construction of political enemies, who function not only as the ‘other’ against which the national in-group is defined, but form a crucial part of the fantasy structures which support them.

2.3.2 The Construction of Political Enemies

In the previous section it was argued that nationalist discourses function, in both discourse theoretical and psychoanalytical terms, to provide an account of society as a unified, harmonious and stable totality. In presenting society *qua* nation in this way, it becomes a potential object of identification for the subject, capable of providing stable identity constructions (or subject positions) with which it can align itself. However, the appearance of completeness and permanence on which the

nationalist discourse depends is the result of ideological practices which mask the ultimate contingency and instability of all discursive formations.

Like all discourses, the nationalist discourse is partial and incomplete and depends for its very existence on those elements which it excludes, or which cannot be articulated within its chain of equivalence. As Torfing (1999: 193) comments:

...in the final instance the homogenization (sic) and substantialization (sic) of the nation can only be obtained in and through the discursive construction of “enemies of the nation,” which are simultaneously outside and inside the nation...

Consequently, the construction of the nation requires the simultaneous construction of an alternative chain of equivalence in which certain enemies combine to conspire against the nation. The conspiracy against the nation can involve external actors, or as a fifth column, an enemy within (see Laclau, 2005: 86-7). Similarly, it may depict both threats as acting in collaboration with one another against the national interest.

The importance of these enemies of the nation is again evident from both a discourse theoretical and a psychoanalytical perspective. The importance of the excluded ‘other’ within the ontology of discourse theory is well rehearsed above, and so will not be revisited here. However, it is necessary to consider the account of nationalism offered by Lacanian psychoanalysis. In particular, the latter allows us to theorise the function of the enemy within nationalist discourses. The argument below will draw in particular on the discussion of racism and nationalism in the work of Slavoj Žižek (1989; 1993) in which he accounts for the prevalence of racist and exclusionary nationalist discourses in terms of the Lacanian categories of fantasy, desire and *jouissance*.

In *Tarrying with the Negative* (1993: 201), Žižek presents nationalist discourses as being primarily concerned with the maintenance and protection of the essence of nationhood (the national Thing), no matter how ephemeral and elusive of definition this apparently is:

National identification is by definition sustained by a relationship toward the Nation qua Thing. This Nation-Thing is determined by a series of contradictory properties. It appear to us as “our Thing” [...], as something accessible only to us, as something “they,” the others, cannot grasp; nonetheless it is something constantly menaced by “them.” [...] If we are asked how we can recognise the presence of this Thing, the only consistent answer is that the Thing is present in that elusive entity called “our way of life.”

In a later passage, Žizek (1993: 202) clarifies his position that that the national Thing must be seen in terms of the Lacanian category of enjoyment (or *jouissance*). ‘A nation exists’, Žizek (1993: 202) argues, ‘so long as its specific *enjoyment* continues to be materialized in a set of social practices and transmitted through national myths that structure these practices’ (cf. Bracher, 1996: 5). The construction of the nation Thing *qua* enjoyment, however, only makes sense in contrast to ‘others’ who organise their enjoyment in different ways. There is a uniqueness attributed to the national Thing, which differentiates it from any other. What makes it unique is its inaccessibility to the outsider; it is ‘our’ national Thing and, as such, is inaccessible to ‘them.’ It is beyond their grasp and comprehension (Žizek, 1993: 201).

The idea of a unique, foreclosed national essence is buttressed by the idea that ‘our’ enjoyment is somehow threatened by the presence of these outsiders. To quote Žizek once more (1993: 204):

Every nationality has built its own mythology narrating how other nations deprive it of a vital part of enjoyment the possession of which would allow it to live fully.

The construction of the ‘other,’ therefore, positions them not just as different from ‘us,’ but as hostile to our way of life; as something which is both radically heterogeneous and which threatens the existence of our national community.

At the basis of our constructions of the other is the inability to discern among them a clear set of motives and desires. It is impossible, in other words, to know with any degree of certainty what it is the ‘other’ wants from us, a dilemma Žizek (1989)

summarises under the rubric '*che vuoi*.' Consequently, the aims and objectives of the other become the basis of our own fantasy constructions in which we impute to them a myriad of plans and designs which remain concealed beneath the surface (Myers, 2003: 94). These hidden agendas, it is argued, pose a threat to the nation and so must be brought to light and stopped, before they can be realised further.

The threat posed by the other usually manifests itself, according to Žižek (1993: 203), in terms of their incomprehensible and excessive enjoyment:

We always impute to the "other" an excessive enjoyment: he wants to steal our enjoyment (by ruining our way of life) and/or he has access to some secret, perverse enjoyment. In short, what really bothers us about the "other" is the peculiar way he organises his enjoyment, precisely the surplus, the "excess" that pertains to this way: the smell of "their" food, "their" noisy songs and dances, "their" strange manners, "their" strange attitude to work. To the racist, the "other" is either a workaholic stealing our jobs or an idler living on our labor (sic), and it is quite amusing to notice the haste with which one passes from reproaching the other with a refusal to work to reproaching him for the theft of work.

That the 'other' comes to represent what are ultimately contradictory and mutually exclusive characteristics is evidence for Žižek that the predominant liberal accounts of racism and xenophobia, which view the latter as resulting from ignorance and misinformation on the part of the racist, are inadequate and unable to explain the cause of racism. Were the racist to be better educated and better informed about the culture of his object of hatred and the economic contribution that this group makes to the host nation, Žižek argues, (s)he would nevertheless remain a racist (Myers, 2003: 103–4). The reason for this is that racist discourses are not based in a rational assessment of socio-political reality, but centre in the fantasmatic construction of the 'other' as threat (Žižek, 2003: 205).

The insight provided by Lacanian theory is to focus not on the actual characteristics or behaviour of the members of a particular ethnic or national grouping, but on the construction of the outsider as an object of fantasy. A clear distinction must, therefore, be made between concrete 'outsiders', that is to say the actual people (be they Jewish, Serbian etc) living side by side with the national in-

group, and the fantasy object of ‘the Jew’ or ‘the Serb’ as a moment of discourse supported by the theft-of-enjoyment fantasy.

Yet, the question remains as to why these fantasies are as powerful as they are, and how nationalist discourses centred around the hostile ‘other’ are able to command such passionate adherence to the national cause. It is insufficient, Žižek argues, to see the other simply as a threat to our national identity. The hostility which arises towards the other and their potential theft of our enjoyment runs deeper than this to the very core of our beings in the symbolic order. As Žižek (2003: 203, emphasis in original) argues:

What we conceal by imputing to the Other the theft of our enjoyment is the traumatic fact that *we never possessed what was allegedly stolen from us*: the lack (“castration”) is originary, enjoyment constitutes itself as “stolen”

In other words, the potential theft of our enjoyment reminds us that the *jouissance* we experience acts only to mask the fundamental loss which occurs with the passage into the symbolic order and the impossibility of a complete, fully-reconciled subjectivity. In the figure of the ‘other,’ to whom we attribute an excessive enjoyment, we experience the return of the Real and are reminded again of the fundamental lack which is at the heart of being. As Žižek (1993: 206, emphasis in original) comments:

the fascinating image of the Other gives a body to our innermost split, to what is “in us more than ourselves” and thus prevents us from achieving full identity with ourselves. *The hatred of the other is the hatred of our own excessive enjoyment.*

For this reason, it can be argued that hatred of the ‘other’s’ excessive enjoyment is really hatred of our own enjoyment, being as it is a pale imitation of the primal *jouissance* which we experienced in the Real as fully unified beings. It brings us face to face with the ultimate instability of our own identity and the impossibility of experiencing again the self-reconciliation of the Real.

2.4 Concluding Remarks

In this chapter it was argued that post-structuralist discourse theory is an ontological theory of the social world which offers scholars a set of concepts and logics which can be employed to understand the emergence, maintenance and dissolutions of specific social orders known as discourses. More specifically, DT and Lacanian psychoanalysis provide with a set of tools which can be employed to study the construction of the nation as a form of political community and the interpellation of individuals as national subjects.

From a discourse theoretical perspective the concept of the nation functions as a nodal point in relation to which an account of society as national community is produced, and the meaning and identity of social objects are constructed. Similarly, the post-structuralist account of the subject, with its roots also in Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, is also able to account for the emergence of the individual *qua* national subject. The Lacanian subject is characterised by fundamental lack of identity and must, therefore, construct an identity for itself through a process of identification with the surrounding social structure. Nationalist discourses provide precisely such an account of society with which subjects can identify and fill out this constitutive void.

By introducing the Lacanian concepts of *jouissance* and fantasy which are integral to the post-structuralist account of political subjectivity, it is possible to account not only for the structure of nationalist discourses, but also their strength and longevity. The fantasmatic support structures which underpin nationalist discourses, it is argued, are the means through which they are able to maintain their affective hold over the national community.

Having set out the main concepts and logics of discourse theory, and having examined the post-structuralist conception of the subject and the nation, we now have all the tools at our disposal for the examination of British national identity in the context of debates surrounding the EU. In the following chapter I shall set out the

approach I take to studying the construction of Britain and the EU in the debates surrounding the EU treaty reform process.

3. Deploying Discourse Theory

This chapter will set out the way in which post-structuralist discourse theory, introduced in the previous chapter, can be applied to the question of British euroscepticism. It aims to link the theoretical discussions in the previous chapter with the actual process of conducting discourse theoretically inspired research. Section 3.1 introduces the work of Jason Glynos and David Howarth (2007) on *The Logics of Critical Explanation in the Social Sciences*, in which the authors investigate the epistemological consequences of deploying of DT and Lacanian theory to examine questions of social and political importance. In so doing, they assess the type of knowledge claims discourse theorists are able to make from within the ontological framework in which they operate. Section 3.2 builds on the preceding discussion by addressing the criteria of validity which are applied to discourse theoretical research. The remainder of the chapter sets out time frame, and the choice of materials to be examined of the current project.

3.1 Logics of Critical Explanation

Having set out the underlying social ontology of discourse in the previous chapter, we are now in a position to consider in greater detail the epistemological and methodological considerations involved in deploying DT to the question of British euroscepticism. A detailed discussion of these issues has been reserved until now, since any evaluation of the logics of critical explanation requires a high level of familiarity with both the concepts and logics of post-structuralist discourse theory and the Lacanian concepts of fantasy and *jouissance*.

The aim of discourse theorists is to make sense of processes and actions through the lens of a new conceptual architecture based around a distinctive social ontology (Smith, 1995: 139-40). In this sense, their goal is to understand their object of study more fully through a process of rearticulating the issue in question using the concepts and logics which constitute the discourse theoretical account of the social world. Any attempt to understand social phenomena in this way are synonymous with the process of explanation (Howarth, 2000: 130-2). Equally, this process of

explanation and understanding is inseparable from the process of rearticulation described above. By rearticulating an object of study using the conceptual architecture of discourse theory, we are at the same time providing an account of its emergence and maintenance as a meaningful social object.

The process of description, understanding and explanation in which discourse theorists are engaged is, therefore, not a linear and sequential process encompassing three separate phases in the process of conducting research. Rather, these are three dimensions of a single, unified process. For this reason, discourse theoretical research can be seen to follow a retroductive logic of enquiry. It aims to transcend the narrow models of testing and explanation which characterise much of mainstream social science, and which depends on an untenable distinction between facts and theory (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 18 ff).

Glynos and Howarth (2007: 133) develop the idea of logics of critical explanation, which they argue enable the discourse theorist to describe, explain and critique the emergence, maintenance and dissolution of structures of meaning, rules and practises in the social world.⁵ The contribution of Glynos and Howarth is to provide a clear conceptual framework through which to conduct research of specific empirical cases in which the various dimensions of the constitution of the social are addressed.

To talk about the logic of a particular practice or regime of practices is to 'seek to capture those aspects which make it tick' (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 135). The logic of a particular practice, however, refers not only to the rules of formation of a particular social order but to its historical conditions of possibility. As Glynos and Howarth (2007: 136; emphasis in original) comment '*the logic of a practice comprises the rules or grammar of the practice, as well as the conditions which make the practice both possible and vulnerable.*' Logics of explanation then are intended

⁵ A major component of Glynos and Howarth's theory centres on the ability of discourse theorists, and those working within a post-structuralist paradigm more generally, to critique existing or emerging social orders (see Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 117-120). Since this ethical dimension of the theory is not of direct relevance to the argument developed in this thesis, it is omitted from the exegesis of their work in the present chapter.

to account not only for the specific characteristics of given a social order but to the political practices through which it emerges, is maintained and, potentially, can be dissolved and replaced by an alternative regime of practices.

The process of explanation consists in the mobilisation of three separate yet interrelated logics – social logics, political logics and fantasmatic logics – which build on and supplement the conceptual architecture developed by Laclau and Mouffe (1985). Social logics are concerned with the rules of formation of a specific social structure or discursive formation, and allow us to describe the internal architecture of a particular social order. It is perhaps useful to think of social logics as ‘the rules of the game’ which exist within any sedimented social structure and dictate the relationship between specific identity positions within it. Laclau (2000a: 76) refers to social logics as a ‘grammar’ or ‘cluster of rules’ which govern the emergence of identities within an order of discourse.

If social logics refer to the internal structure of a discursive formation, political logics refer to the practices involved in the ‘constitution, contestation and sedimentation’ of a particular discursive formation (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 142). They account for the political actions by which a particular articulation of the social is able to achieve and maintain hegemony. Conversely, the same logics account for the process of political contestation through which existing, sedimented discourses can be challenged by rival discursive projects, which aim to bring about a dislocation in the hegemonic discourse leading to a rearticulation of existing social relations.

In his most recent works, Laclau (2005: 117) too appears to distinguish between social and political logics in this way, arguing that ‘[w]hile social logics refer to rule following, political logics are related to the institution of the social.’ However, the existence of what Glynos and Howarth term political logics can be traced back to his earlier work with Chantal Mouffe. As was detailed in Chapter 2, Laclau and Mouffe (1985) develop the logics of equivalence and difference to explain the emergence, maintenance and dissolution of discursive formations. Glynos

and Howarth (2007: 141-5) identify these logics of equivalence and difference as specifically political logics in the sense that they refer specifically to the processes through which political contestation takes place. Political movements seek to achieve hegemony for their world views through the construction of equivalential chains around central nodal points which offer a surface of inscription for different social demands (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985; Laclau, 2005).

It will be recalled from the discussion in the previous chapter that the logic of equivalence functions by uniting disparate identity positions which are linked together in a single discursive formation through their shared rejection of a common enemy or antithetical identity structure. The logic of difference, meanwhile, accounts for the system of differential identities which persist within a discursive formation, despite the equivalence which is constructed between the various moments of that discourse. Together the logics of equivalence and difference enable us to examine and explain the process through which rival political projects construct competing social objectivities.

For Glynos and Howarth (2007) mapping the rules of formation of a hegemonic discursive formation and explaining its emergence, maintenance and/or dissolution in terms of the logics of equivalence and difference does not fully exhaust the process of critical explanation in which discourse theorists are engaged. The applications of social and political logics must be supplemented with a further consideration of the fantasmatic support structures which underlie existing social structures. Therefore, Howarth and Glynos (2007) introduce what they term the fantasmatic logic, which completes their analytical toolkit.

If social logics account for the system of social relations in a given discursive terrain, and political logics explain how a particular set of social relations or regime came into being, is maintained or is being contested, fantasmatic logics explain why a particular, hegemonic articulation of the social is able to maintain its 'grip' over the subjects (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 145). Fantasmatic logics aim to explain the ability (or inability) of a particular discursive formation to attain pre-eminence or to

resist change (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 145). As such, they are of crucial importance to the current study which is concerned with the deeply sedimented discourses of British national identity.

The prominence given to the fantasmatic dimension of social relations marks the increasing influence of Lacanian theory in the field of DT (see Stavrakakis 1999; Laclau *et al* 2000; Laclau 2005). In particular, Laclau's (2005: 110 ff) recent work on populism has highlighted the crucial importance to discourse theorists of this affective dimension of political relations, and the indebtedness of their insights in this context to Lacan.

As was argued in the previous chapter, the concept of the subject developed by discourse theorists (Laclau, 1990; 1996) owes much to Lacanian psychoanalysis and to the application of the Lacanian concepts in the work of Slavoj Žižek (1989, 1993; on Žižek's dialogue with Laclau see Butler *et al* 2000). Glynos and Howarth (2007) too draw on Lacan's analysis of fantasy and *jouissance* to develop their concept of fantasmatic logics. Fantasy and affective investment in particular discourses such as nationalist discourses, they argue, are of crucial importance in explaining the outcome of discursive conflicts and the success of certain discursive projects over others.

Fantasmatic logics function essentially to mask the radical incompleteness and indeterminacy of the social. As was argued in the previous chapter, the role of fantasy is to cover over 'the fundamental lack in reality' and, in so doing, suppresses the emergence of the Real in the symbolic structures we live by (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 146). Furthermore, by masking the fundamental incompleteness of the hegemonic social structures (what, in Lacanian terms, is referred to as the lack in the 'big Other'), the function of fantasy is to mask over the lack in the subject itself (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 146). In this respect the fantasmatic dimension plays a crucial role in the sedimentation of existing social formations, and their construction as the natural and necessary forms of social and political organisation. The process of masking over the traces of the contingency of the prevailing social order results from

what Laclau and Mouffe (1985) term ideological practices. In this sense, we can refer to the processes described here as the ideological function of fantasy (Glynos and Howarth, 2007).

In addition to this ideological function, fantasy structures play a crucial role in determining the specific content of a discursive formation, or what Glynos and Howarth (2007: 147) term the specific ‘vector’ of political forces within a given social environment. As we saw in Chapter 2, the notion of fantasy is derived from Lacanian concept of the lacking subject, which desires the lost fullness and primal *jouissance* of its pre-symbolic Real existence. Consequently, Stavrakakis (2005: 73) has argued that it is the ‘promise of recapturing our lost/ impossible enjoyment which provokes the fantasy support for many of our political projects and choices.’ This desire for an absent fullness has been termed the ‘enjoyment of closure’ by Howarth and Glynos (2007: 151). The promise that a particular form of social organisation, articulated within a given discursive project, can provide us with a stable fully-constituted identity leads to the affective investment of the subject in a political project, and helps to explain the vehemence with which the goals of these projects are pursued. For analytical purposes, we can refer to this function of fantasy structures in these instances as the affective function of fantasy.

Glynos and Howarth (2007: 147) identify two principal forms of narrative in which the ideological and affective functions of fantasy are played out, which they term the ‘beatific’ and the ‘horrific’ dimensions of fantasy. The former is structured around the idea of ‘a fullness-to-come’ once specific obstacle to this fullness is overcome; the latter, meanwhile, tells of the impending disaster which will prevail of the obstacle in question is not surmounted (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 147). Whilst the specific beatific and horrific aspects of fantasy take many forms in different contexts, they are often associated with images of ‘omnipotence or of total control’ in the case of beatific narratives or of ‘impotence and victimhood’ in the case of horrific narratives (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 147).

Having set out the function of the logics of enquiry in analysing specific research questions, it is necessary to say something at this point about the ontological status of these logics, or rather to their relationship to the ‘ontical/ ontological distinction’ (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 153). One question which arises in particular at this stage concerns the apparent overlap between the concept of discourse in the works of Laclau and Mouffe (1985) and the concept of social logics set out here. Whilst the category of political logic can be seen as a umbrella term which refers collectively to Laclau and Mouffe’s logics of equivalence and difference – and, in so doing, highlights the symbiotic relationship which exists between the two in the political constitution of social reality – the concept of a social logic appears more or less indistinguishable from the concept of a discourse *qua* semi-permanent social structure.

Glynos and Howarth (2007: 153) indeed appear to differentiate the ontological status social logics, on the one hand, from political and fantasmatic logics on the others. They argue that:

whereas social logics are substantive, in the sense that their identity is virtually coterminous with the social practices and contexts they inform and make possible, political logics have a formal aspect, enabling us to specify them with some precision independently of the fields of meaning in which they operate. And the same is true of fantasmatic logics because we can separate out the ontological from the ontical aspects in a more robust way than is possible in the case of social logics

Political and fantasmatic logics, therefore, can be seen as ontological categories, which are filled out or substantiated with a specific ontic content in different social contexts. They are categories which enable us to account for both the general (ontological) conditions of possibility of a given discursive formation, and its specific (ontic) content as the product of political contestation and fantastic investment (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 153). Social logics, by contrast, appear to lack this ontological dimension and are concerned instead with the ontic content of a particular discursive formation (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 154).

For the purposes of this study the concepts of ‘discourse’ and of ‘social logics’ will be viewed as two sides of the same coin. Whilst the former refers to the contingent, semi-permanent social structures, the latter will be used to connote the mode of enquiry employed to deconstruct the internal logic of a specific discursive formation and produce the latter as a meaningful object of analysis within the conceptual architecture of DT.

The concepts of social, political and fantasmatic logics set out above will, therefore, be employed to explain the structure and the potency of the eurosceptic discourse of British national identity, and the ability of competing discourses to challenge it. Given the overlap between the concepts of a discourse and a social logic, the discussion of eurosceptic and pro-European discourses in subsequent chapters will not make direct reference to the term social logic. However, the current project aims to map the fundamental tenets of the eurosceptic discourse and the various identity positions which this constructs. In identifying the internal grammar or the rules of formation of specific discourses, therefore, I will be invoking this aspect of the explanatory process.

Having identified the representation of Britain and the EU present within the eurosceptic discourse of British national identity, the principal focus of my analysis will be on the logics of equivalence, difference and fantasy through which it is possible to account for the constitution, sedimentation and the emotive force of these discourses. In my examination of the media debates about the EU, I shall refer more frequently to the logics of equivalence and difference than I will to the concept of political logics as an umbrella term. Separating out the logics of equivalence and difference will allow me to examine more clearly the process through which these structures are formed and maintained through the division of the social world into competing equivalential chains. The concept of fantasmatic logics will be used to explain the affective hold that this eurosceptic discourse is able to exercise over British citizens and the high degree of sedimentation which this discourse exhibits. Consequently, the Lacanian ideas of *jouissance* and fantasy are of crucial importance

to the discourse theoretical account of British euroscepticism, which is presented below.

Before preceding with the discussion below, a brief comment is necessary about the ‘critical’ dimension of the explanatory logics discussed above. Glynos and Howarth (2007: 152-3) are clear that the moment of critique is inseparable from the process of describing, understanding and explaining an object of study using in terms of social political and fantasmatic logics. To do so, they argue, ‘is already to engage in a process with normative and political valence’ the essence of which is ‘to emphasize that the identity of a practise cannot be taken for granted’ (Glynos and Howarth 2007: 153). The nature of critique amounts to laying bare the contingent and thus contestable nature of social relations; it involves the challenging of even the most highly sedimented practices and the ideological structures which surround and support them. In this sense, the current project can be seen as an act of critique, which calls into question the most deeply held assumptions about the British national identity and the relationship of Britain and the EU.

3.2 Validity of Research

As Howarth (2000: 132) comments, ‘discourse theorists take a more complex stance towards the production of truth and the “verification” of knowledge than those social scientists whose methods are derived from the natural sciences. From a post-structuralist perspective it is impossible to uncover *the* correct reading of any set of social practices. There can be no single, unchallengeable exegesis of a given text, only a plurality of both complementary and contradictory readings, which depend on the theoretical frameworks within which they are produced. Consequently, the reading of the texts analysed within the context of this study does not exhaust their interpretative potential, nor does it claim to present a definitive and indisputable account of the construction of Britain and the EU in current newspaper debates.

Given the ontological and epistemological underpinning of discourse theory it is impossible to ‘test’ the conclusions which discourse theorists draw from their research in the way in which some branches of the social sciences claim is possible.

Discourse theory adopts instead a sociological conception of truth grounded in the work of Thomas Kuhn (1970). The value of the interpretations offered by discourse theorists will be judged by the persuasiveness of the account they provide and their reception by the academic community to which they are addressed (Howarth, 2000: 142). Jason Glynos and David Howarth (2007: 38) argue in a similar vein that ‘an account is accepted as a valid explanation only if it produces insights and greater illumination according to criteria which can be publicly articulated, criteria concerning evidence, consistency, exhaustiveness, and so on.’

The role of the ‘tribunal of critical scholars’ (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 39) is to adjudicate whether the explanations proffered by discourse theorists meet the criteria set out in the previous paragraph. They may question, for example, whether the account produced is coherent and internally consistent, whether it presents a reasonable reconstruction of events and practices analysed and whether it is adequately supported by evidence and example. Disputes about the meaning and significance of certain findings are impossible to eliminate completely and there is no objective arbiter of truth which can mediate between contradictory interpretations of a particular case (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 40). Instead, the validity of any explanatory account is decided ‘within orders of discourse (or paradigms) using criteria established by those orders themselves’ (Howarth, 2000: 133; cf. Wittgenstein, 1953). In this sense, the criteria of validity in discourse theoretical research are also fundamentally discursive and dialogical in nature.

Discourse theorists are accused by mainstream social scientists of failing to subject their theories to the same sort of rigorous testing which mainstream social science expects of its practitioners. However, this argument fundamentally misunderstands the discourse theoretical conception of the social world in which a clear separation of fact and theory is impossible. The social ontology provided by discourse theory does not permit the existence of theory independent facts against which the validity of discourse theoretical accounts can be tested. Instead, the very process of discourse theoretical research involves the rearticulation of the object of study using the concepts and logics of discourse theory itself. The facts of a

particular case are not given but are constructed within the very process of explanation. Consequently, there must a different criterion of validity which can be employed by discourse theorists in keeping with their underlying ontological and epistemological commitments.

Although the discourse theoretical conception of social research as a community based activity appears to be a long way removed from the criteria of validity employed by mainstream social science, on closer inspection the two approaches are far closer than may be thought. The existence of peer reviewed journals to which mainstream social scientists appeal in order to gain recognition for their work and to establish the validity of their findings is evidence of precisely the same sociological conception of knowledge production held by discourse theorists.

The social scientist may well acknowledge this fact, but respond that there nevertheless exists a fundamental difference between the ability of peer review processes to adjudicate between the findings of scholars in mainstream political science as opposed to the discourse theoretical paradigm. The difference, it could be claimed, arises from the fact that the mainstream social sciences adhere to a clearly demarcated criterion of truth according to which divergent theoretical accounts can be evaluated against hard facts. The value of a piece of research, therefore, depends on the extent to which the hypothesis it presents is corroborated (or potentially falsified) by the 'facts' discovered' by the social scientist. The community of scholars is called upon to adjudicate on the reliability of the methods and adequacy of the data collection techniques employed rather than on the overall validity of the account produced, since this is beyond the remit of subjective interpretation. For mainstream social scientists the validity of a piece of research is insured by the facts of the matter alone. If the correct methods are employed, the data is gathered correctly and measured accurately then the validity of a theoretical account will be assured.

This argument rests, however, on the assumption that there are theory independent facts – 'brute data' in Charles Taylor's (1971) terminology – against

which empirical theories can be tested. As should be clear from the preceding discussion, this assumption is disputed by discourse theorists. The latter argue that theory independent ‘facts’ do not exist outside of discourse, awaiting discovery by the social scientist armed with the correct methodology (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985).

Following Heidegger, discourse theory starts from the assumption that we are ‘always already’ situated within a world of meaningful objects and practices, which condition our experience of the physical reality in which we are situated (Howarth, 2005: 322; cf. Heidegger, 1962: 88-90). For discourse theorists, the ‘facts’ of the world are not given; instead they are constructed within specific spatial and temporal discursive formations. They are dependent upon the system of differential meaning constructed by specific discursive formations. Consequently, the social researcher has no direct, unmediated access to their object of study (Howarth, 2005: 322). Our ability to access the social world depends instead on its articulation within certain discourses and so the task of the discourse theorist is to study the emergence of particular discursive formations and the articulation and the identity structures to which they give rise.

The criteria of validity for the current research project then will ultimately be the community of scholars, both within the field of discourse theory and without, who are interested in the question of British euroscepticism and attitudes towards the EU. The materials analysed in the context of study are widely available on the internet and in public libraries, so the possibility exists for anyone who wishes to challenge my conclusions, or to seek an alternative narrative of Britishness and Europeanness, to repeat the present study using the same materials. The study could be replicated either by scholars working within the discourse theoretical paradigm or those coming from an alternative ontological perspective, and employing a different set of concepts and logics than those provided by discourse theory. It is possible, for example, to challenge the reading I offer from within the discourse theoretical paradigm by criticising the application of specific concepts and logics, or questioning the interpretations I offer of the articles analysed at hand.

I remain confident, however, that the analysis presented here meets the criteria of coherence, consistency and exhaustiveness set out above. The materials analysed were selected randomly from a cross section of the political spectrum of the British print media and analysed in their entirety, and without exception. The principle themes which emerged were identified as faithfully as possible and the assertions I make were supported with clear examples (more of which could be marshalled to support a given point on demand and could have been included in a longer piece of work). The reconstruction and explanation of the issue at hand forms a coherent and well supported account of Britain and the EU in the print media, bringing new insights to the understanding of British national identity and the relationship between ideas of Britishness and Europeanness which emerge from contemporary debates on the EU. In the remainder of the current chapter, I set out the research design of the current project and the methodology employed in analysing the discursive processes set out above.

3.3 Time Frame

The aim of this study is to examine the construction of Britishness and Europeanness in the media coverage of the European integration process. Consequently, this project seeks to scrutinise the media coverage of an event of great significance not only for the EU, but also for the relationship between the EU and the UK. The decision was taken to focus on the debates surrounding the negotiation and ratification of the proposed European Constitution and the subsequent Reform Treaty which, after the abortive attempts to ratify the Constitution, was negotiated by European Heads of State and Government to bring into force many of the institutional and policy developments originally included in the constitution.

Existing studies of the media representation of Britain and the EU have focussed on key events in the development of the EU such as the launch of the Euro in 1999, the negotiation of the Nice Treaty (Ichijo, 2002) and Britain's presidency of the EU in 1998 (Anderson and Weymouth, 1999). The obvious choice for the current project was, therefore, to analyse a subsequent British presidency of the EU or an

event of similar importance in the evolution of the EU to those examined in these studies.

Britain held the presidency of the EU during the second half of 2005, in which it made reform of the EU budget and, in particular, the Common Agricultural Project (CAP) its priorities. The latter is a matter of great controversy in political debates within the UK; it is seen as a policy to which Britain makes a significant financial contribution without gaining any perceivable benefits given the relatively small percentage of the British economy accounted for by agriculture. In addition, those who are employed within the farming and fishing industries are felt to be detrimentally effected by both the CAP and the Common Fisheries Policy which set quotas on the production of agricultural products and levels of catch for fishermen. The media, and the tabloid press in particular, often cover issues related to the functioning of CAP and the apparent unfairness of the system. Examples are easy to find – in the print media in particular – of apparent wrongs brought upon Britain by the CAP.

Since the publication of the above studies, there have been two major developments within the EU. On the first of May 2004 ten Central and Eastern European Counties (CEECs) acceded to the EU bringing the membership of the EU up to 25 states. On 1 January 2007, these new members were joined by Romania and Bulgaria. With 27 member-states, the membership of the EU had almost doubled in size within the space of 32 months. Given the very recent transition to democracy of these countries following the end of the cold war, and their comparatively low levels of GDP in comparison with the existing member-states, the accession of the CCECs presented the EU with certain logistical and financial challenges in terms of both the functioning of its principle institutions, its working culture, and also the financing of policies such as the CAP and the Structural Funds. For this reason, the accession to the EU of these countries was politically controversial in many member-states.

The second major issue confronting the EU in the period since 2002 was the attempt at negotiating the *Treaty Establishing a Constitution for the EU*, which

would replace the exiting *Treaties Establishing the European Community* and the *Treaty on European Union* which had functioned as the *de facto* constitution of the EU, setting out the functioning of the institutions and delineating, albeit somewhat opaquely, the policy competences of the EU. The intention was that the new constitution would address the question of institutional reforms inadequately addressed at Nice, whilst increasing democratic accountability and the popularity of the EU in the eyes of citizens.

The Constitution aimed to define more clearly both the *raison d'être* of the EU and the respective competences of the national and supranational levels of governance. In addition, there were repeated references in the text of the constitution to such as symbolic objects as an EU anthem and flag. The hope was that by adopting the clothes of the nation state, the EU would slowly be able to foster the same type of loyalty and support amongst citizens, which nation-states enjoy. In the end, by attempting to assume the trappings of nationhood, the drafters of the constitution revealed not only the poverty of their political imaginations (being able to conceive of the path to greater legitimacy only in the terms the existing model of the nation-state and the symbols invented to legitimise it in the 19th century), but also the extent to which they had misjudged the mood of the citizens of many member-states. In the referendums held in France on 29 May and in the Netherlands on 1 June 2005 the electorates of both countries rejected the Treaty Establishing a Constitution for the EU by clear margins.

Following a period of consultation and reflection, the abortive constitution was resurrected in a repackaged and slightly amended form. Gone were references to an EU Foreign Minister, flag and anthem. What remained were many of the substantive changes to the functioning of the EU institutions, such as the reduction in size of the European Commission and European parliament as well as alterations for the conditions under which certain decisions may be taken by Qualified majority Voting (QMV) and, following last minute amendments, the voting weights each country will enjoy under this revised system. The document was also somewhat different in appearance to the proposed constitution in that it retained the format of

existing treaties rather than of a constitution. Although mainly aesthetic in nature, this change allowed national leaders to present the new agreement as a reform treaty as opposed to a constitution. The result was the *Treaty of Lisbon* agreed and signed at the European Council meeting in the Portuguese capital on 19 October 2007.

There are sound reasons for focusing on any one of these events or processes. It is unnecessary in a study of this nature to attempt a comprehensive analysis of the media coverage of all three of these events and processes. As highlighted above, the type of discourse analysis conducted by discourse theorists is qualitative rather than quantitative in nature. Consequently, it requires the discourse theorist to undertake a detailed reading of a smaller corpus of texts than may be analysed by scholars working in other traditions where, for example, quantitative analyses of a wider range of texts may be undertaken with the assistance of discourse analysis software.

The UK presidency of the EU and the negotiations leading up to enlargement would have made potentially interesting case studies. However, the choice of the debates surrounding the Constitution and the subsequent Reform Treaty has distinct advantages over the other possibilities. Firstly, the debate surrounding the constitution was a process lasting for a period of several years, from the initial Decision to convene the Convention on the Future of Europe at the Laeken European Council of 2001 to the final agreement on the Treaty of Lisbon in October 2007. This allows me to analyse the construction of the key terms and subject positions over a sustained period of time and also to look for any shift in the discourses analysed. This would not be possible in a study focusing on a shorter time frame such as the six months of the UK presidency of the EU in 2005. Nevertheless, analysing the period of time over which the constitutional debate developed remains feasible within the context of a project of this scope.

Secondly, the negotiation, agreement and abortive ratification of the proposed constitution along with the subsequent emergence of the Reform Treaty were centred round a series of Intergovernmental Conferences (IGCs) and European Council summits. Because of the high-level political bargains they give rise to, European

Council summits tend to receive far greater coverage in the British media than other events or institutions in the EU.⁶ For this reason, focussing on these events is sure to provide me with a substantial, yet manageable, corpus of texts on which to base my study.

Thirdly, the debates surrounding the Constitution and the Reform Treaty, were not restricted to a specific set of issues but were concerned with the institutional organisation as well the policy competences of the EU. Above all, the Constitution, and the problems with its ratification, brought into sharp focus a number of issues surrounding the very nature of the EU and its relationship both to citizens and its member-states. What is the central mission for the EU in the 21 century? What is the relevance of the EU in the lives of European citizens today? What is the correct division of powers between the EU and the member-states? The debates inspired by these issues provide the type of material which allows us to gain a more profound insight into the predominant understandings of Britain and Europe which underlie the relationship between Britain and her continental partners. Finally, the debate surrounding the Constitution and reform Treaty is the most recent event in the evolution of the EU. Thus, by focussing on this debate my research will be able to comment on the most recent media constructions of Britain, the EU and their relationship to one another.

3.4 Sources Examined

In order to support the claims I make about the insights discourse theory can offer us into the discursive construction of Britain and the EU, it is necessary to explore these processes of discursive construction in operation. I sought to highlight specifically eurosceptic discourses of British national identity as well as competing discourses of Britishness, which construct an alternative, non-exclusionary relationship between Britain and Europe.

⁶ The obvious exception here is the *Financial Times*, which due to its editorial specialisation tends to report extensively on the activities of the European Commission, especially in the field of trade and competition policy.

The assumption of this project is that debates about the EU emerge in what I term national-discursive contexts. Indeed, debates over politics and political identity in general are largely confined to separate national-discursive spaces centred round national (or state bound) media outlets, political parties and institutions. Consequently, I am able to talk about a specifically British discourse of euroscepticism. I employ the term national-discursive context to highlight the fact that, whilst the nation and the discursive space remain distinct entities, to a large extent the latter tends to map on to existing political frontiers. Since debates about the EU tend to be conducted within nations, the terms in which these debates are conducted can achieve different meanings in different national contexts. The precise meaning which terms such as the nation, Europe and the EU obtain in separate national debates will impact directly upon the way in which political identities are constructed in those countries. Constructions of Britishness, for example, will depend on the position this term comes to occupy in the system of differential meanings which pertain within the national-discursive space in Britain. Since we are dealing with a specifically British discursive space, the analysis undertaken in this study is perfectly equipped to respond to the central question posed by this study, concerning the variations in identity structures at the national level.

I examine the coverage of the negotiations and ratification processes of both the proposed *Treaty Establishing a Constitution for Europe* (TCE) and the subsequent *Treaty of Lisbon* (TOL) in five British daily newspapers and their Sunday equivalents. By examining these sources I aim to assess whether there is evidence of a specifically eurosceptic discourse of British national identity evident in public debate on the process of European integration in Britain. I examine also the range of subject positions available to British citizens in order to construct their political identities.

Television, radio, print media and the internet are the key locations in which political debate occurs, and in which the meaning of key political terms such as Britain and the EU are constructed. However, this presents the researcher with a

potentially enormous body of texts to draw on. Some boundaries must, therefore, be drawn.

The decision to focus on newspaper articles was at least in part a response to existing studies on the representation of the EU in Britain, which focus overwhelmingly on this medium (Anderson and Weymouth, 1999; Ichijo, 2002). In addition, newspapers are often agenda setters in the British media (Anderson and Weymouth, 1999). In addition, there are obvious practical reasons for focusing on newspapers within a study of this size and magnitude. Although discourse theorists take a wide variety of sources as examples of discourse (see Torfing, 1999; Howarth, 2000), the process of conducting discourse analysis requires in the first instance that all materials collected be converted to form of text (Taylor, 2001; Jorgenson and Phillips, 2002).

This assumption of this study is that newspapers, like all institutions and actors, emerge within discourse, and are thus the product of specific discursive chains of signification (Torfing, 1999: 219). At the same time, however, newspapers play a crucial role in the reproduction and subversion of the hegemonic discursive formation through articulatory practices. It is impossible, therefore, to see newspapers (or other public documents) as simply the cause or the effect of public opinion towards the EU (see Hansen, 2006). Instead, they are in a dynamic and mutually constitutive relationship with the latter. Like the subject themselves, newspapers are simultaneously both the product, and the cause, of the discursive environment in which they are situated.

Consequently, newspapers provide the researcher with a fascinating object of study. They can be viewed as windows into a particular discursive environment at a specific moment in time; a document of the discursive terrain at a particular juncture in a political process. Obviously, given the epistemological commitments of DT, these documents are inherently ambiguous and open to a plurality of different readings. The researcher will approach these artefacts from a particular standpoint, rooted also in a specific discursive environment. The account which (s)he produces,

therefore, will be an interpretation of these documents from a specific place in time and through the lens which (s)he brings to bear on the newspapers examined. Nevertheless, in conceptualising newspapers in the context of hegemonic discursive practices, they are able to serve as an exemplar of broader societal discourses open to interpretation using the concepts and logics provided by DT.

3.5 Selection of Articles

The articles examined are taken from five British daily newspapers (and their Sunday equivalents), which comprise a representative cross section of the British print media, reflecting both political alignment and type of publication. Both left- and right-wing newspapers were included in the study representing tabloid, quality and mid-range newspapers. Broadly speaking, the British press can be divided up in terms of genre and political alignment as in *Table 3.1* below. The only newspapers included in this study, and thus in this table, are British newspapers. Scottish, Welsh and Northern-Irish newspapers, as well as the regional editions of national newspapers are excluded from the study. The table includes the daily circulation figures for each of these newspapers in brackets.

	Left	Right
Quality	<i>The Guardian</i> (364,513) <i>The Independent</i> (240,134)	<i>The Daily Telegraph</i> (882,413) <i>The Times</i> (642,895)
Mid		<i>The Daily Mail</i> (2,353,807) <i>The Daily Express</i> (789,867)
Tabloid	<i>The Daily Mirror</i> (1,525,477)	<i>The Sun</i> (3,126,866) <i>The Daily Star</i> (771,197)

Table 3.1: The Structure of the British Press. Source: Guardian (2009)

The quality press can be divided along ideological lines between those on the left and the right of the political spectrum. The tabloid press and the mid-range press are skewed more heavily towards the right. Only *The Mirror* can be thought of as a

left of centre publication in either of these categories, and in the mid-range press, there is a total absence of any left-of-centre publications to challenge the market share of *The Mail* and *The Express*. These are considered to represent the interest of ‘middle England’ and are conservative in outlook (Anderson and Weymouth, 1999). I shall reserve comment at this stage about the particular position these papers occupy with reference to the EU, as this will be expanded upon and substantiated in far greater detail in the context of the discourse analysis presented in subsequent chapters. The important point at this stage is to ensure that the newspapers selected broadly reflect the political make up of the press.

Given the broadly similar political outlook of the newspapers in each cell of the Table 3.1, I chose to select one paper from each cell for analysis. In each case, I chose the newspaper with the highest circulation in each category. Since there was no suitable mid-range left-of-centre publication available for analysis, this gave us five newspapers in total: *The Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Mail*, *The Sun* and *The Mirror*. Whilst this may bias the selection of articles towards the right, it nevertheless reflects the skewed nature of the British media and, therefore, the biases to which British citizens are exposed in the coverage of EU as well as other political affairs.

Articles from these newspapers were collected undertaken using the Lexis-Nexis database and, where adequate search facilities were available, through newspapers own websites using the following keyword search: *European Constitution* or *EU Constitution* or *EU Treaty* or *Reform Treaty*. The terms *Lisbon Treaty* and *Treaty of Lisbon* were not used as search terms as only at the very end of the time period analysed, during the European Council summit in Lisbon in October 2007 was the name for the treaty decided.

It was decided to focus on the media coverage of the key events in the constitutional process rather than throughout the time period from the opening of the *Convention on the Future of Europe* to the final agreement of the *Treaty of Lisbon*. Focusing on the whole of this timeframe would have lead to a potentially larger body of sources to analyse, and a greater variation in the relevance of the sources selected.

The media coverage of the lead up to an event, the event itself, and the fall out in the days after the event were all analysed over a seven day period straddling each event. In cases where an event lasts more than one day, such as European Council summits which are spread over two days or more, the seven day period is skewed towards the aftermath of the event rather than the lead up to.

The decision to focus on key events in the treaty reform process was taken on the common sense assumption that coverage during and after the event would be of substantive events and agreements, whereas articles in the lead up to the summit would be more speculative in nature, focusing on expectations for the summit, rather than the detailed issues to be discussed. This had the additional advantage of ensuring that the subject matter covered would more likely be the same in each newspaper, facilitating a more direct comparison between the constructions of Britain and Europe which emerged in each title.

Having downloaded the articles returned by the keyword search they were reviewed for relevance and those articles which did not focus on the EU treaty reform process itself, and merely mentioned one of the relevant keywords only in passing, were discarded. This process yielded a total of 1346 articles. Of course, the length of the articles in question and the degree to which they focused specifically on the relationship between Britain and the EU (or indeed on the EU at all) varied considerably. Consequently, no concrete inferences can be drawn from this about the depth and quality of the coverage in each of the newspapers examined. Nevertheless, these numbers serve as a rough guide to the amount of attention paid to each of the events examined and to EU related issues as a whole in each title. They also indicate the volume of material involved in the present study. The events to be analysed, the precise dates to be covered, and the number of articles collected for each time period are shown in *Table 3.2* on the following page:

<i>Event...</i>	<i>Date...</i>	<i>Period of Analysis</i>	<i>No. of articles</i>
Presentation of Draft Constitution	20 July 2003	June – July 2003	202
European Council (Political Agreement on the Text of Constitution)	16-17 June 2004	June 2004	184
Signing of Constitution	29 October 2004	Oct – Nov 2004	129
French & Dutch Referenda	29 May & 1 June 2005	May 2005	204
European Council (Declaration on the ratification Process)	16-17 June 2005	June 2005	253
European Council (Statement on relaunching the ratification Process)	15-16 June 2006	June 2006	30
European Council (Mandate for IGC to draw up a new Reform Treaty)	21-22 June 2007	June 2007	171
European Council (Political Agreement on text of Reform Treaty)	18-19 October 2007	October 2007	173

Table 3.2: Timeframe of Project

The number of articles collected for each newspaper in each time period is shown in *Table 3.3* below:

<i>Event...</i>	<i>The Sun/ NOTW</i>	<i>The Mirror</i>	<i>The Mail</i>	<i>The Telegraph</i>	<i>Guardian/ Observer</i>
Draft Constitution 20 July 2003	53	22	63	40	24
European Council 16-17 June 2004	36	12	43	48	45
Signing of Constitution 29 October 2004	29	6	32	38	24
Fr/ Dutch Referenda 29 May / 1 June 2005	35	7	39	58	65
European Council 16-17 June 2005	46	17	37	89	64
European Council 15-16 June 2006	9	0	5	11	5
European Council 21-22 June 2007	45	10	31	53	32
European Council 18-19 Oct. 2007	42	13	38	56	24

Table 3.3: Number of Articles Collected and Examined.

In the next three chapters I will set out the eurosceptic discourse of British national identity which emerged principally from the right-wing press before examining the counter-discourses evident in the left-wing press in Chapter 7. Within the context of this study there is no analytical distinction made between articles published in daily and Sunday newspapers. In examining the coverage of the EU in each of these titles, therefore, I do not differentiate explicitly between the daily and the Sunday versions of each newspaper. I refer, for example, to the *Mail* as a generic

term denoting both daily and Sunday variants. The same applies to the *Telegraph* and the *Mirror*. Only where the name of the Sunday newspapers differ radically from those of the equivalent daily publication – i.e. in the case of *the News of the World* (*NOTW*) and the *Observer* – are the Sunday titles referred to explicitly, and thus differentiated from their daily sister papers. This, however, is to facilitate accurate referencing of the articles cited and does not imply an analytical distinction between these and other Sunday titles.

4. The Nationalist Logic of European Politics

The present chapter, along with the two subsequent chapters, examines the eurosceptic discourse of British national identity. Given the orientation of the newspapers examined towards the EU in the context of this study, these chapters focus principally on the construction of Britain and the EU in the right-wing press. As was argued in Chapter 1, opposition towards the process of European integration amongst the citizens of EU member-states is associated with narrow and exclusively national political identities. It will be argued that the eurosceptic discourse constructs an image of Britain as being separate from, and antagonistic to, the EU. Consequently, the related constructions of British national identity are formed in opposition to the EU, and the idea of a common European identity which it presupposes. By analysing the construction of Britain and the EU using the conceptual toolkit provided by post-structuralist discourse theory, it is argued, we are able to account for the prevalence of exclusively national identity constructions among British citizens, and the low levels of support for the European integration procedure with which these are associated.

The argument presented in this chapter is that exclusively national identity constructions are, at least in part, a consequence of the terms in which political debate surrounding the EU is conducted. Drawing on the work of Michael Billig (1995) and discourse theorists such as Jacob Torfing (1999), it was argued in Chapter 2 that there has been an almost complete normalisation of the logic of nationalism within established, western nation-states. This is certainly the case in the debate surrounding Britain's relationship with the EU, in which the nation is seen as a natural political community and the nation-state is presented as the most logical form of social and political organisation. The underlying nationalism of modern political discourse is the most common of all common-sense assumptions about the nature of the social world.

For the discourse theorist, however, no form of political organisation is either necessary or essential (Laclau and Mouffe, 1985). All socio-political structures are

the result of a successful hegemonic project, which is able to dominate the field of discursivity and act as a surface of inscription for disparate social demands. The current pre-eminence of the nation-state as the default form of political organisation results from the hegemonic status of the nationalist discourse of politics; the appearance of permanence is merely the myth that masks the ultimate contingency of all social orders (Laclau, 1990).

Consequently, there is nothing which predetermines people to view politics through the lens of the nation-state. There is no inherent reason for people to see their interests as shared with those who hold the same passport as they do, rather than those from other countries with whom they share characteristics such as social class, gender, religion or ethnicity. The attachment felt by citizens to the nation-state as a form of political organisation, and the enduring loyalty which citizens express towards their national in-groups, is the result of a process of political socialisation which starts at birth and continues throughout our lives (see Billig 1995).

People are cued to think of their identity and interests in national terms by the constant reproduction of the nationalist logic of politics. The enduring strength of nationalist discourses, and the hold they have over individuals, is reinforced by the fantasmatic support structures which buttress the nation as a form of political community and help interpellate individuals as national subjects (Žižek, 1993; see also Glynos and Howarth, 2007; Althusser, 1971). Nationalist discourses, therefore, have not only been able to reach a high level of sedimentation, but are able to draw on a powerful fantasmatic support structure which underpins the continued loyalty shown by citizens to the nation as a form of political community.

By offering an account of euroscepticism, which situates the debates about the EU within the context of a more general discourse of nationalism, we are able to fully appreciate the potency of eurosceptic discourses. The eurosceptic discourse of British national identity, and the particular constructions of Britain and the EU which it presents, draw on and incorporate this pervasive and highly-sedimented discourse

of nationalism.⁷ However, as was argued in Chapter 2, this underlying, ‘banal’ form of nationalism is not exclusive to the UK, but is the defining characteristic of all established nation-states (Billig, 1995). What is noteworthy in the case of the UK is that the particular brand of nationalism which emerges – within the eurosceptic discourse at least – is based on a particularly narrow and exclusionary concept of the nation, which sees the latter as incompatible with any form of political organisation at another level of abstraction. The very idea of a European Union, therefore, runs counter to the most basic principle of modern politics: that the nation-state is the only legitimate repository of the political.

Because of the underlying nationalism which informs the eurosceptic discourse, supra-national politics is presented as a competition between member-states for political advantage. There is no sense in which EU level policies can be seen as mutually beneficial or to contribute to some greater good above and beyond the narrow self-interest of state actors. Instead, rival states aim to maximise their political influence in the EU and their share of the resources it has at its disposal. What is more, EU politics is constructed within the eurosceptic discourse as a zero-sum game: success for one state implies by definition failure for another. In particular, Britain is presented as being in direct competition with France for supremacy within the EU. Both countries, it appears, attempt to further their material interests (at the expense of the other) and to assert their competing visions of the EU and its future direction.

However, it will be argued below that there is another dimension to this narrative of EU politics as inter-state rivalry. The competition between Britain and France does not occur on a level playing field: France is able to draw on the support of other powerful member-states such as Germany, as well as senior figures within the EU institutions, such as the Commission, in order to support its position on a given issue. France is seen as an EU ‘insider’; it represents the EU establishment and is the mouthpiece of ‘Old Europe.’ Britain, by contrast is presented as being the outsider, confined to the periphery of the EU. The UK is unable to penetrate the

⁷ From hereon referred to simply as ‘the eurosceptic discourse.’

inner-circle of member-states by whom, and in whose interests, the EU is run. For this reason, France is seen to have greater influence within the EU and to be of greater political importance than the UK, meaning it is virtually impossible for the UK to further its own interests through this forum.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. Section 4.1 will examine the construction of the nation as a natural political community. The EU by contrast is constructed as an artificial political entity which can never reproduce the democratic form of government possible within the nation-state. Section 4.2 will examine the construction of the EU through the lens of the nation-state arguing that within the right-wing press EU politics is constructed as a competition between member-states. Sections 4.3 and 4.4 focus in more detail on the relationship constructed between the UK on the one hand, and France, Germany and their allies on the other. The Franco-German alliance appears to dictate the process of integration for its own ends. The UK by contrast is seen to bear the costs incurred by the policies designed to benefit its closest rivals. In section 4.5 I develop this argument further by relating the dynamics of these inter-state rivalries to the concept of a 'core' Europe. Finally, in Section 4.6 I examine the fantasmatic support structured on which these constructions are based and which are able to account for their enduring strength.

4.1 Nationhood and Political Community

The coverage of the EU in the right-wing press demonstrates the underlying nationalist assumptions of the eurosceptic discourse of British national identity. Nations are seen as primordial entities, which are prior to the emergence of the nation-state as a form of government. Consequently, the nation-state represents the realisation of the political destiny of distinct peoples and the embodiment of their right to govern themselves in their own territorial domain. The very logic which underpins the EU, it is argued, runs counter to this goal of national self-determination.

4.1.1 *The Primacy of National Identity*

National identities are viewed within the right-wing press as the predominant form of political identity. A sense of a common European identity amongst the citizens of the EU, it is argued, is limited and has been unable to generate a sense of common political identity similar to that which exists between the members of national communities. Conservative MEP Daniel Hannan comments, for example, that ‘very few people think of themselves as Europeans in the sense that someone might be Russian or Swiss’ (Hannan, *Telegraph*, 13 June 2004).

This lack of common European identity, it is argued, is reflected in EU citizens voting behaviour. Graeme Wilson (Wilson, *Mail*, 23 June 2005) claims that French and Dutch referendums demonstrate how ‘people’s identities are rooted in their own nations, not in Europe.’ Mark Steyn meanwhile argues that, rather than voting as Europeans, ‘Britons vote as Britons’ and other nations such as the Dutch vote as Dutch (Steyn, *Telegraph*, 21 June 2005). It follows, therefore, that this is the level of abstraction at which governmental power ought to reside.

4.1.2 *The EU as Artifice*

If the nation-state is constructed within the right-wing press as the natural form of political organisation, trans-national or supra-national government is seen as running counter to this natural order. The EU is not an authentic or organic form of political community like the nation; it is a completely artificial political grouping. This point is made by Mark Steyn writing in the *Telegraph* on 8 June 2004, who repeats the words of former US President Ronald Reagan. Reagan assured his countrymen that ‘we are a nation that has a government – not the other way around’ (Steyn, *Telegraph*, 8 June 2004). Steyn argues that in the EU, it is indeed ‘the other way around.’ The EU is a government without a nation, he claims, like the Soviet Union before it and Mugabe’s Zimbabwe today. Steyn’s argument is that a sense of common identity amongst any group of people, a sense of nationhood, is a pre-requisite, rather a consequence, of collective government and shared institutions.

Steyn repeats this argument some weeks later. Claiming that ‘identity is primal,’ he argues that a Peruvian is unlikely to change his identity structures and become a Bolivian simply because he is impressed by certain articles within the Bolivian constitution (Steyn, *Telegraph* on 22 June 2004). Identity then is not something that can be changed or shifted to a different level of political organisation on rational or utilitarian grounds. The parallel with the EU is clear: being Danish, British or French is a primordial and deeply held identity which cannot be replaced or supplanted by an entity such as the EU, no matter what the benefits of EU membership are. In other words, not only do Britons vote as Britons, but it is impossible for them to do anything else since their attachment to the nation will override all practical concerns. To even attempt to construct trans-national forms of government is to do something quite unnatural which must necessarily fail.

Melanie Phillips calls the EU ‘an *artificial entity* created to control’ countries such as the UK (Phillips, *Mail*, 12 May 2003, emphasis added). If the EU is in some way artificial then, by implication, the countries it seeks to control must be seen as the natural units of governance. Some four years later Phillips repeats the argument that the EU is in some way an artificial creation. This time, however, she employs more colourful imagery to describe the revamped EU which emerges from the Lisbon Treaty (Phillips, *Mail*, 25 June 2007). She argues that the new treaty turns the EU ‘into a constitutional freak, a bureaucratic Frankenstein’s monster without a shred of democratic legitimacy.’ The EU is thus not only an artifice, but a dangerous and sinister artifice; an unaccountable monster which poses an unambiguous threat to the UK.

4.1.3 Democracy and the Nation-State

The coverage of the EU in the right-wing press is characterised by numerous references to the lack of democratic accountability from which the EU suffers. This would seem to reflect concerns by citizens and scholars alike about the apparent ‘democratic deficit’ from which the EU suffers. However, the accusation that the EU in its current manifestation lacks sufficient channels of democratic accountability

must be separated from the claim that the EU is, because of the nature of the organisation, inherently undemocratic.

The assumption made within the right-wing press is that democratic government is only possible within the nation-state. Only the nation-state, it is argued, is able to provide the sense of community and common belonging required for democracy to function. Conservative Party Leader Michael Howard sums up this argument succinctly, commenting that (Howard, *Telegraph* 9 June 2004):

it is essential that people feel a sense of ownership over – and solidarity with – the institutions that serve them. The only institution that can provide that sense of ownership and solidarity is the nation-state. Without a strong and independent state, no modern democracy can prosper. The nation-state is what binds the people of a country. It gives people an identity and a sense of purpose. That is why I am so hostile to proposals that would transfer more power from Britain to the European Union- and why I want to return powers from Brussels to Westminster.

Similarly, Conservative MEP Daniel Hannan argues that ‘European democracy fails because there is no demos – no community with which we identify when we use the word “We” – only the kratos of a system that must compel obedience through force of law, not loyalty’ (Hannan, *Telegraph*, 13 June 2004). Elsewhere, Hannan argues that ‘supra-nationalism [...] has never yet found a way to co-exist with democracy (Hannan, *Telegraph*, 14 May 2005 b). The process of European political integration is simply the latest in a long line of unsuccessful, and inevitably futile, attempts to disregard the nation-state. Hannan cites the ‘Habsburgs and the Ottomans, the Yugoslavs and the Soviets’ as forerunners to the EU in their attempts to construct a supra-national state. All these attempts, however, ended in ignominious failure for ‘as soon as their peoples were given the vote, they opted for self-determination.’ Interestingly, Hannan’s list fails to include the British empire and the struggles for independence from the latter fought by the peoples of countries such as India.

A similar line of argument is evident in the *Mail* and the *Sun*. An editorial from May 2003 argues that British institutions have evolved for thousands of years to

suit the character of the nation, and that these simply cannot be replaced by those at a European level without undermining democracy (*Mail*, 8 May 2003). Similarly, Jim Sillars comments that '[w]e in the UK are sufficiently alike to be a genuine political society and democracy. But does that feeling stretch across the Channel? No' (Sillars, *Sun*, 11 June 2003).

It is evident, therefore that the primacy of national identity over other forms of identity is a central tenet of the eurosceptic discourse. The national community is presented as an organic political community, and any attempt to construct such a political community at the supra-national level is not only futile, but offends the natural social order in which the peoples of the world exist as independent, self-governing societies.

4.1.4 The EU as Ideal

In the previous section it was argued that the nation-state is constructed as a natural and organic political community, standing in stark opposition to the EU as an entirely artificial entity. These assumptions are reflected in other aspects of the eurosceptic discourse. A recurring theme throughout the coverage of the EU treaty reform process is the association of support for the EU with idealism and dogma. In the same way in which the EU is seen to run counter to the natural social order, the goal of European integration is constructed as a utopian ideal which fails to take account of the political realities of the world in which it exists.

'Europhiles' are described variously as 'EU dreamers' (Kavanagh, *Sun*, 26 May 2005), or as 'true believers' (Rennie, *Telegraph*, 26 May 2005) who follow 'the dream of ever closer union' (*Mail*, 28 May 2005). 'Brussels,' we are told on another occasion, 'dreams of taking a giant stride towards creating a new superstate called Europe' (Wilson, *Mail*, 30 May 2005). The *Sun* argues that 'the EU's elitist leaders so desperately want to further their dream of a European superstate' (*Sun*, 16 June 2004).

In the aftermath of the French referendum, we are told that ‘supporters of a federal Europe now have to face up to the shattering of their dreams’ (Wilson and Sparks, *Mail*, 30 May 2005) and that ‘the underlying faith in the doctrine of “ever close union”’ has never before been seriously challenged (Helm, *Telegraph*, 18 June 2005). The *News of the World* tells us ‘Mr Blair will be forced to admit that his European dream is over’ (*NOTW*, 29 May 2005).

The idea that one can be a ‘true-believer’ in the EU invests the European integration project with quasi-religious qualities. The metaphor of the EU inspiring a religious like devotion in its supporters recurs repeatedly throughout the coverage of the treaty reform process. The EU is presented as something which, like the scriptures, must be accepted as an article of faith and which inspires boundless and unquestioning devotion in its adherents.

The most zealous believers are the European political class who are seen to be the driving force behind the integration process. Pro-European leaders are described as being not just federalists but ‘ardent federalists’ (*Telegraph*, 13 June 2003), ‘fervent federalists’ in ‘the hard core federalist camp’ (Helm and Rennie, *Telegraph*, 3 June 2005), or as ‘Euro-fanatics’ (Phillips, *Mail*, 21 June 2004; see also Phillips, *Mail*, 30 May 2005). The Belgian Foreign Minister Karel de Gucht is described as a ‘diehard federalist’ (Rennie, *Telegraph*, 7 June 2005). The same term is applied to Luxembourg’s Prime Minister Jean-Claude Juncker who, later in the same article, is also referred to as an ‘arch-federalist,’ a term also used to describe German Foreign minister Joschka Fischer (Helm, *Telegraph*, 18 June 2005) and Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt (Hughes and Eastham, *Mail*, 17 June 2004). Elsewhere, reference is made to ‘the federalist ideologues of Brussels’ (*Mail*, 24 June 2005). Nic Cecile of the *Sun* goes so far as to describe Britain’s minister for Europe, Dennis MacShane, as ‘insanely federalist’ (Cecil, *Sun*, 1 December 2004).

British Prime Minister Tony Blair is accused of being a ‘blazing zealot’ on the question of ‘Europe,’ which is central to his entire political philosophy (Phillips, *Mail*, 21 June 2004). Europeanism, we are told, offered Blair ‘an attractively idealistic, apparently unthreatening radical philosophy’ through which he was able to

distinguish his politics from that of the Conservative party (Phillips, *Mail*, 21 June 2004). The claim that 'Blair is at heart a true-believer in the European "project"' is repeated on other occasions in the *Mail* (see for example *Mail*, 8 June 2005 a).

In a similar vein, Toby Helm tells us that 'Tony Blair, still *idealistically* European, *preached* that Britain could never punch its weight in the EU unless it was serious about joining the euro' (Helm, *Telegraph*, 4 May 2005, emphasis added). The EU is presented here as an idealist project whose quasi-religious message is preached to the masses by true Europhile missionaries such as Blair. Blair's devotion to the European cause is further underlined when it is contrasted with the views of Gordon Brown. Brown's position towards the EU is described by Charles Moore using a similarly ecclesiastical metaphor. Writing in the *Telegraph* some two years after Helm, Moore argues that '[i]f Europe is a church,' Mr Brown 'is an occasional attendee, not a devout worshipper' (Moore, *Telegraph*, 20 October 2007).

At other times, the EU is compared to a cult rather than a religious order in the more traditional sense. The European movement is presented as being like a religious sect whose followers adhere to its strictures with an unquestioning zeal. Following the French and Dutch referenda in 2005, the EU entered a so-called 'period of reflection' in order to assess the ramifications of these results and the possibility of reviving certain respects of the constitution. On this subject, Belgian Prime Minister Guy Verhofstadt commented: 'We are doing like in the US, putting the dead in the fridge in the hope of resuscitating them later.' His somewhat colourful metaphor, while perhaps a departure from the bland, legalistic terminology for which the EU is much criticised in the right-wing press, nevertheless seems to be an apt description of the way in which the Constitution had apparently been put on ice. For *Telegraph* correspondent David Rennie, however, this was evidence that they were acting 'like a Californian cult who put a beloved guru in a "cryogenic" vault, ...,believing medical science will one day learn how to revive them' (Rennie, *Telegraph*, 17 June 2005 b).

Rennie's article seems to interpret Verhofstadt's words in a particularly sinister way, reading into them the idea that EU is some sort of cult which exists

beyond the mainstream of 'normal' life and 'normal' politics. It also seems to personify the Constitution itself into the EU cult's own 'guru.' This invests the document with the power to command unquestioning loyalty and obedience and to demand adherence from its followers to all its strictures. The significance of these metaphors is that they present the EU as a political vision which, like a religion, is accepted by its followers as an article of faith, but which does not necessarily reflect the political realities of the world in which it exists.

The European integration project is thus described using language very different from that employed to describe the nation-state. Nowhere are those who oppose the expansion of powers towards the EU described as idealistically nationalist, for example. The marked difference in the terminology employed reflects the assumption that, whilst nations are natural political communities, the EU is an artificial construction which goes against the natural political order.

4.2 EU Politics as a Zero-Sum Game

It was argued in the preceding sections that the coverage of the EU politics in the right-wing press is informed by a narrow, nationalist conception of politics according to which nations are assumed to be organic political communities and the nation-state is seen as the natural form of political organisation. In this section, I examine the consequences of this for the construction of EU level politics within the eurosceptic discourse of British national identity.

Given the nationalist assumptions underlying the eurosceptic discourse, it is impossible to conceive of any form of political community beyond the nation-state. Consequently, a supranational body such as the EU poses a conceptual challenge to those steeped in this tradition of thought. The way in which commentators account for the existence of the EU is to see it as a forum for inter-state bargaining which provides a structure for managing the relations between sovereign nation-states. Any idea that the EU is about building a common identity or a shared form of political community is simply impossible within this conceptual framework.

From the articles examined in the context of this project, it is evident that the EU level politics is indeed viewed in the right-wing press as a forum for international bargaining in which member-states seek to pursue their national interests through the channels opened up by the EU. Similarly, the idea that the EU is, or could become, an emerging polity in its own right is fiercely rejected. Crucially, EU politics is constructed as a zero-sum game played by competing member-states with clear winners and losers from each new regulation or treaty revision. There is no sense of mutual gain or of common European interests emerging from the process of European integration. Consequently, where one member-state derives some benefit from a measure adopted at the EU level, this is seen to come at the expense of other member-states, whose position in relation to this state is diminished. Almost invariably, the states which are seen to benefit are France, Germany and their allies, whilst the benefits they enjoy are seen to come at the expense of the UK.

4.2.1 Sport and War as a Metaphor for EU Level Politics

The fact that international politics in general, and affairs within the EU in particular, are conceived in zero-sum terms is reflected in the language and imagery employed to depict the process of EU level politics and the treaty amendment process. There are repeated references to both sport and war; arenas in which the distinction between winning and losing is clear cut and (in the case of the latter in particular) it is extremely difficult to conceive of outcomes that are mutually beneficial to both parties involved. The worlds of sporting and military conflict are also fields in which national rivalries clearly come to the fore, and in which the UK is brought into direct conflict with its neighbours.

In the case of sport, British teams continue to take the field against opponents from France, Germany, Belgium and other European countries. Whilst war between the member-states has been avoided within the lifetime of most EU citizens, the memory of past conflicts between Britain and France and Germany in particular lives on in the frequent references made to them in the media and elsewhere. Somewhat ironically, given that the principal aim in forming the European Communities in the decade after the Second World War (WW2) was to avoid future conflicts between

the European powers, it is in the context of debates within the EU that the memory of these conflicts are most often brought to bear.

We are warned in the run up to the European Council Summit in June 2007 that Prime Minister Gordon Brown faces a ‘bruising battle over Europe’ (*Telegraph*, 17 June 2007). The battle, we are told, will be fought against other member-states and particularly Germany. The title of the articles sets the context by stating that ‘Brown faces Germany’s EU Treaty Push.’ The specific choice of language here evokes images of the First World War (WW1) in which the term ‘push’ was synonymous with the seemingly needless waste of life brought about by soldiers attempting in vain to take their opponent’s trenches. We are left in no doubt that the summit will be a war of attrition in which the UK’s interests are set against those of its long-standing enemy Germany. The implication is also that the whole exercise may be as futile as those bloody pushes in WW1, and the outcome as costly for the UK.

Reporting on European Council negotiations, Patrick Hennessy uses an extended military metaphor to explain both the conduct and outcome of the proceedings (Hennessy, *Telegraph*, 19 June 2005):

By attracting a small but sufficient number of allies, and refusing to bow before French-led demands to negotiate on Britain's rebate without a matching pledge to reform agriculture spending, the Prime Minister can claim that he at least avoided defeat in Brussels. The principal peril facing him, of course, as countless European campaigns have proved down the centuries, is that surviving a battle does not necessarily mean that you will win the war.

Hennessy then uses the imagery of the Napoleonic wars to report the mood at the fractious meeting at which the fallout from the French and Dutch referendums, as well as the ongoing budget negotiations, were on the agenda. As the meeting fell on the 190th anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, Blair and Chirac were depicted as Wellington and Napoleon respectively as they trudged into their respective briefing rooms and vented their frustrations at the stance adopted by one another. In the same article quoted above, he comments:

In contrast to the historic encounter between Wellington and Napoleon, there was no direct engagement. But the war of words between the two nations was as ferocious as any veteran observer of European Union summits could remember.

This passage is revealing for a number of reasons. Firstly, it will be noted how the Battle of Waterloo is described as an ‘historic encounter.’ This phrase is indicative of the importance given within the right-wing media not only to the longevity of the British “nation” but also to the importance of military conquest in forming and maintaining its sense of independent statehood. This military history is also one in which the opponents Britain faced, the challengers to its independence and freedom, come from continental Europe in the Napoleonic wars and the two world wars. Secondly, the events at the summit are presented as a war of words. This creates a direct parallel between the bloodier events of centuries past and those within the EU today. EU summits are placed within a longstanding tradition of antipathy between Britain and France. Whilst the rules of engagement may have changed the underlying antipathy remains constant.

Similar military metaphors are to be found in the *Mail*. William Rees-Mogg tells us, for example, that ‘[i]n the drafting committee, the Labour MP Gisela Stuart is fighting to win back lost ground, and may achieve the sort of gains we won in World War I – a few hundred yards of recaptured trenches’ (Rees-Mogg, *Mail*, 30 May 2003). The negotiations over the proposed Constitutional Treaty then are constructed as being a war of attrition as arduous as WW1 and, by implication, with the same futility of suffering along the way.

Melanie Phillips likens the agreement reached on a European reform treaty at the European Council meeting in June 2007 as being ‘the equivalent of a white handkerchief waved at Trafalgar’ (Phillips, *Mail*, 25 June 2007). This creates the image not only of defeat and surrender on the part of the British delegation, but also the idea that the European Council is simply warfare by other means. Whereas in the 19th century international conflict was fought out bloodily on the battle field, modern day conflicts play out behind closed doors in the Justus Lipsius building in Brussels.

The only constant is that the UK is faced with a hostile coalition of European states with whom it must engage to defend its interests.

In the *Sun* military metaphors are frequently employed to describe negotiations between national leaders at the EU level. George Pascoe-Watson tells us that Tony Blair is once again ‘braced for a bloody battle with arrogant EU leaders’ (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 31 May 2005 b). The following month, we learn that ‘Tony Blair's battle to keep Britain's £3billion EU rebate was dealt a hammer blow’ (Kavanagh and Wooding, *Sun*, 13 June 2005). Meanwhile, a *Sun* editorial from 2004 urges Tony Blair to ‘fight for a different Europe today,’ pleading with the Prime Minister to ‘[w]in this battle once and for all’ (*Sun*, 17 June 2004).

Interestingly, the *Sun* reports that Britain has enjoyed a degree of success in defending its negotiating positions in these supposed ‘battles’ with other EU leaders and the European Commission. George Pascoe-Watson, for example, reports how ‘[t]he PM insisted he had fought and won a battle to stop the EU seizing control of Britain's tax, defence and foreign policies’ (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 21 June 2003). Regardless of who is depicted as the victor in these negotiations, the crucial point to note is that relations between respective member-states, or between member-states on the one hand and EU institutions such as the Commission on the other, are presented in zero-sum terms. If there are winners, there must also be losers; but there is no sense in which outcomes can be mutually beneficial to all parties.

4.2.2 Defending the National Interest

Since EU level politics is seen as a competition for advantage amongst rival member-states, the role of national governments, according to the eurosceptic discourse, is to defend the ‘national interest’ rather than to seek compromise, or to work constructively for mutually beneficial solutions to common problems facing all European governments.

The *Telegraph*, for example, urges Prime Minister Tony Blair to ‘stop fretting about his communautaire credentials and concentrate on protecting the national

interest' (*Telegraph*, 19 June 2005). In other words, it is not the job of a British Prime Minister to concern himself with the wellbeing of the EU as a whole, but simply to defend Britain's interests. The very idea that the national interest needs defending assumes that it is in some way under threat. Furthermore, the implication of the passage quoted is that to defend the national interest, and to work for some of the broader aims of the EU (to be 'communautaire') are by definition mutually exclusive goals. It would appear that an active and constructive engagement with the EU in and of itself runs counter to the national interest as it is construed here. It is impossible to conceive of the national interest in broader terms such that it may actually be advanced by common action at the EU level. The national interest, by definition, involves resisting any further cooperation at the EU level. Only the single minded defence of self-interest is an acceptable approach to take when entering into negotiations with other EU governments.

Nowhere is the need to defend the national interest more evident than in the case of European Council meetings at which high-level inter-governmental decisions are made about the most politically sensitive issues. Consequently, politicians attempt to present themselves as defending their national interest in almost every statement they make in the lead up to, and the aftermath of summits. On 13 June 2005, for example, the *Mail* reports that Tony Blair was 'ready to plunge the EU into crisis rather than surrender to French and German demands to give up Britain's £3 billion rebate' (Eastham and Chapman, *Mail*, 13 June 2005). For Blair, the prospect of isolation within the EU is easier to contemplate than the potentially explosive response of the political and media establishment were he to cede ground on this issue of the British rebate.

The expectation that British politicians should be seen to defend the national interest is reflected in the rhetoric of the government itself. Like his predecessor as Prime Minister, Gordon Brown presents himself as adopting a robust negotiating position in the lead up to the final negotiations on the Treaty of Lisbon. Commenting on his objectives for the forthcoming summit meeting, Brown assures listeners that he will have to be 'absolutely sure that the British national interest has been

safeguarded in every one of the issues that we have raised' (Chapman, *Mail*, 12 October 2007) a claim which is repeated a week later (Chapman, *Mail*, 19 October 2007; see also Eastham, *Mail*, 21 June 2003; Phillips *Mail*, 14 June 2004).

The *Telegraph*, too reports politicians only too keen to claim that they are defending the national interest. In June 2004, for example, we are told that Prime Minister Blair had 'assured MPs that he would "protect the British national interest"' (*Telegraph*, 16 June 2004). Elsewhere, Mr Brown's assurances that he will 'put the national interest first' are also reported (Kampfner, *Telegraph*, 15 June 2007). Later that month, we learn that Mr Brown has also 'praised the outgoing PM's "skills" in securing a deal that protected Britain's national interest in key areas such as the Charter of Rights (Kite, *Telegraph*, 24 June 2007; see also Helm, *Telegraph*, 12 October 2007; Kosoff, *Telegraph*, 20 October 2007; Helm and Waterfield, *Telegraph*, 21 October 2007; Kirkup and Waterfield, *Telegraph*, 24 October 2007).

In the *Sun*, politicians' assurances that they will defend the national interest are also in ready supply. Trevor Kavanagh, for example, reports Prime Minister Tony Blair's assurances that he will 'protect the British national interest on the issues to do with tax, foreign policy and defence' at the forthcoming meeting of EU Heads of State and Government at which political agreement on the text of the Constitutional Treaty would be sought (Kavanagh, *Sun*, 17 June 2004). Similarly, before the meeting to agree on the final text of the Lisbon treaty, George Pascoe-Watson reports that 'Mr Brown insisted Britain's national interest will be protected because four red lines will guarantee sovereignty in key areas' (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 19 October 2007; see also Kavanagh, *Sun*, 9 June 2003).

If politicians are not seen to be defending the national interest at all costs, they are derided for selling the country down the river. Ceding sovereignty to the EU in any policy area is depicted as an act of defeat or surrender in which the UK's interests are sacrificed for the benefit of other member-states. This point is made by ex-minister Kate Hoey. Referring to the recent agreement reached by Prime Minister Brown on the final text of the Lisbon Treaty. 'No matter how many times he

proclaims he is standing up for British interests,' Hoey argues, 'the public and many in his own party will sense a sell-out' (Hoey, *Mail*, 21 October 2007). In a similar vein, James Chapman refers to the impending deal on the constitution into which Brown will enter on the UK's behalf as 'the great EU cave-in' despite the reassurances attributed to Brown in the same article that he will 'at all times stand up for the British national interest' (Chapman, *Mail*, 18 October 2007).

In summary, EU level politics is presented as a series of zero-sum bargains between member-states, whose governments seek to defend their interests and maximise their gains, relative to other similarly minded and equally self-interested member-states. EU summits, in particular, are portrayed as events at which the British government is put under pressure to concede ground by other member-states keen to advance their own national interests at the UK's expense. This is evident not only in the way in which events at the EU level are reported, but also in terms of how the issues are presented by political actors themselves. Citizens are cued to think of EU politics through the lens of their own member-states, and to view other member-states as a threat to this rather than as partners in a shared and mutually beneficial project.

4.3 Britain, France and the EU

The function of the sporting and military metaphors employed within the right-wing press is not only to construct an account of the social world in which the UK is positioned as separate from the other member-states in the EU, but to present the latter as posing a threat to British interests which must be guarded against. The presence of these hostile others across the channel, and of Britain as a nation under threat, provides a fantasmatic underpinning to the construction of the EU as an international forum and to the nationalist logic of politics on which it depends. In this section, I will expand upon the argument set out above by analysing the construction of the relationship between Britain and France: the member-state whose interests are most clearly, and most often, depicted as running counter to those of the UK.

According to the eurosceptic discourse there is an asymmetry in terms of the benefits which arise to member-state as a result of EU membership. Certain member-states, such as France, benefit disproportionately from the European integration process, whilst the costs which arise from the EU are born by others states, most notably the UK. The benefits which accrue from the EU reflect the relative power and influence wielded by these states within the EU machinery. Unsurprisingly, those states which gain the most from the EU are also those who exercise the greatest power and influence in decision making. The EU is seen as a French invention in which the rules of the game are designed to meet the specific policy aims of the French and to maximise their influence within the Union. By contrast, the UK is presented as being marginalised within the EU decision making procedures. Consequently, the benefits France gains from the EU, it is argued, come at the UK's expense.

In this section I will analyse the construction of France and Britain within the eurosceptic discourse, focusing on both the input these countries are seen to have in EU decision making, and the output they gain from the EU in terms of the costs and benefits which accrue to them from that membership. In addition, I shall examine the fantasmatic support structures which underpin this construction of Britain, France and the EU. Before considering these points, however, I shall examine the apparently divergent interests of these states.

4.3.1 Competing Visions, Competing Interests

According to the right-wing press, Britain's interests are fundamentally different to those of other large member-states such as France. John Kampfner's comments in the *Telegraph* on 5 June 2005 are indicative of this belief that there are competing French and British visions of Europe (Kampfner, *Telegraph*, 5 June 2005). He states:

Ever since the UK's application to join the Common Market was rebuffed not once but twice by Charles de Gaulle, it has become axiomatic in Whitehall that there are two visions of Europe- ours and theirs (the French).

Here we see the historic and longstanding nature of this variance of interests between the UK and France on the most fundamental questions about the purpose and nature of the European integration project. There appears to be such a clear divide between the British and French conceptions of the EU's very *raison d'être*, that it seems impossible to reconcile these interests. One of these two competing visions, it would seem, must ultimately prevail.

The feelings attributed to the British civil servants above appear to be shared by the French. They too see Britain and France as having competing and mutually exclusive world views, which have led the two nations into conflict. Mary Ellen Synon, for example, argues that (Synon, *Mail*, 19 June 2005):

Britain's role in French history, as they see it, has always been to frustrate. A frustrated Napoleon faced an unconquered Britain across the Channel and declared: 'Let us be masters of the Straits of Dover for six hours, and we shall be masters of the world.' He couldn't do it, and the Anglo-Saxon model became the master of the world.

The divergent visions of the EU held by the French and the British can be seen to reflect a broader set of historical, geographical and philosophical differences. The latter inform their respective conceptions of the national interests and, consequently, the specific political outcomes they pursue in the EU. These differences in outlook come to the fore most clearly in the realm of economic policy and the perceived role of the state and the market in the management of the economy. Such is the ubiquity of economic issues in the media debates surrounding the EU that a separate chapter is dedicated to them. We shall return, therefore, to the construction of Britain and France within the field of the economy in Chapter 6. For the remainder of the current section I shall focus on the way in which this relationship is constructed in other areas.

4.3.2 The Costs and Benefits of EU Membership

According to the right-wing press, Britain's membership of the EU has a detrimental effect on the UK, whilst benefiting other member-states such as France and Germany at the UK's expense. Such is the disillusionment evident within the

right-wing press that the *Mail* asks rhetorically if there is even any point in the UK belonging to the organisation (*Mail*, 12 June 2005 b). 'Our membership of the EU,' it argues, 'is like having a hangover without even having been to a party the night before.'

Similarly, the *Mail* editorial published on the same day asks rhetorically what the British have to show for their years of EU membership and the efforts of their politicians to place us at 'the heart of Europe.' The answer is very little other than '[t]he lunacies of the Common Agricultural Policy and the Common Fisheries Policy' and 'the obscene corruption and the torrent of nitpicking regulations that British ministers are all too ready to endorse' (*Mail*, 14 June 2004).

France, by contrast, is seen to benefit enormously from its membership of the EU. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP), along with the related Common Fisheries Policy (CFP), is the example *par excellence* of a policy which is seen to work in France's favour and at the UK's expense. A *Sun* editorial (15 June 2005) argues, for example, that:

France has ridden the gravy train since the Common Market began almost 50 years ago. French farmers freely admit they wouldn't survive in a genuinely free market where everyone competed on level terms.

The negotiations over the EU budget, which were ongoing throughout 2005 and early 2006, in which the issue of CAP reform was to the fore, highlight this point most clearly. Whilst France benefits from EU policies such as the CAP, it is the UK which is seen to be footing the bill for a wasteful and inefficient policy. The *Mail* goes so far as to claim that the very reason the UK was allowed to accede to the then EEC was so that it would pay exorbitant contributions to the EU budget in order to subsidise mainly French farmers (*Mail*, 12 June 2005):

First rejected in case we got in the way of France's plan to subsidise its farmers, we were grudgingly let in on condition that we handed over our fishing grounds and paid a cripplingly high membership subscription to the Brussels club.

The very logic of allowing the UK to accede to the then EEC then would appear to be the desire by France to gain access to UK fishing stocks and to make the UK the communities paymaster, having already rigged the budgetary and political arrangements in its favour.

For this reason, it is easy to understand the apparent popularity of the EU in France. Reporting from France in the lead up to the French referendum on the Constitutional Treaty, Peter Hitchens makes this very point, arguing that '[t]he EU is popular here because it pays, and because it leaves the French alone' (Hitchens, *Mail*, 15 May 2005). By implication, the fate of the British is the exact opposite: it is an expensive interference in our lives that brings little, if anything, in terms of concrete benefits.

There is ample support given to the idea that the UK is the EU's paymaster in the *Telegraph*. The title of George Trefgarne's article in the *Telegraph* on the 9 June 2005 claims for example that the UK is to 'swell Brussels coffers by £14.6bn' (Trefgarne, *Telegraph*, 9 June 2005). The article goes on to comment that this is the equivalent of 4p on the basic rate of income tax, or the entire budget of the Home Office, and would make the UK the second largest contributor to the EU budget after Germany. This analysis of the EU budget is accompanied by a critique of the uses to which EU funds are put and the inefficiency and corruption which undermines their effectiveness in achieving the goals they are designed to meet.

Daniel Hannan makes a similar argument claiming that since the UK acceded to the (then) EEC in 1973, only Germany and the UK have been net contributors to the budget whilst Luxembourg, with the highest per capita GDP in the EU, is a net recipient of EU funds (Hannan, *Telegraph* 12 June 2005). In the *News of the World* highlights the UK's 'monumental "gesture" of paying £41 billion (yes, that's £41,000,000,000) into the EU coffers since 1992' (Hague, *NOTW*, 12 June 2005). The apparent unfairness of the UK contribution along with the wastefulness and inefficiency associated with the distribution of funds at the EU level mean that any renegotiation of the budget and the British rebate must not be countenanced.

4.3.3 Applying EU Law

An additional aspect of the eurosceptic discourse is the claim that the French and British have very different attitudes towards EU law and, more specifically, to the enforcement of these laws. As much as Britons may moan about the quality and quantity of legislation emanating from Brussels, so the argument follows, they are meticulous in implementing regulations and directives and adhering to the standards and procedures they establish. In fact, it is because EU law is implemented so meticulously in the UK that the advancement of the integration process is so fiercely resisted, since any new measures will have real and demonstrable impacts on the way the UK is governed. France, by contrast, is accused of simply disregarding any new measures which are not in its interests or of which it does not approve.

As the *Telegraph* (15 June 2007) argues that ‘France has a long tradition of dining *à la carte* from the menu of such constitutional requirements.’ In a similar vein, Ann Leslie comments (Leslie, *Mail*, 21 May 2005):

The French love bureaucratic Euro-regulations- the more the merrier. As long, of course, as those regulations are French inspired and can be imposed on others, as with the 48 hour week; and as long as, whenever it suits France, they can be ignored

Elsewhere the *Mail* comments that ‘while we as ‘bad’ Europeans continue to play by the rules, countries such as France, Germany, Spain and Italy regularly use every trick in the book to give their own companies preferential treatment’ (*Mail*, 16 November 2004; see also *Mail*, 23 November 2004).

Peter Hitchens, meanwhile, urges readers who wish ‘to escape from the European Union’ to head for France (Hitchens, *Mail*, 15 May 2005). He continues arguing that:

Nowhere are the silly regulations of the European Commission ignored with such bravado, while the French are wonderfully expert at coaxing every possible advantage from the Brussels monstrosity. They have learned how to milk the dinosaur. They laugh, shrug, and get on with it.

Thus it appears easy to see why the burden of EU regulation falls heavier on the British than on the French. Whilst France is the driving force behind legislation which works in its own interest and against those of rival member-states such as the UK (which will diligently implement measures nonetheless), it simply disregards those regulations which run counter to its interests. Most laws, it appears, are French inspired and so serve the French national interest while penalising the British; the remainder are simply set aside by France while the British go on naively applying the rules.

This sense of injustice, and of Britain being taken for a ride by the French, is pervasive in the sources examined here. When seen in this light, it is easy to understand why British citizens, cued to view the EU as a bargaining ground for nation-states, fail to see the value of the EU for them and for their country. The EU game is one which Britain appears to be losing and its traditional rival France is winning.

4.3.4 Power and Influence within the EU

The EU treaty reform process is constructed in the eurosceptic discourse as a French led project and, as such, one which will work in France's interest. Ownership of the constitutional convention is attributed to former French President and Chairman of the Convention on the Future of Europe, Valéry Giscard d'Estaing. There is no shortage of references to Giscard's input in drafting the constitution, or to his nationality, which seem to imply that the document reflects a French conception of the future direction of the EU. In the *Telegraph*, for example, David Trimble describes him as 'the grand architect of the constitution' (Trimble, *Telegraph*, 20 October 2007). The metaphor of Giscard as an architect of the future EU is one which recurs throughout the media coverage of the treaty reform process.

The idea that the Constitutional Treaty is a French invention reflects the more general assumption that the EU is a French-led project working in the interest of France and her allies, and against that of the UK. William Rees-Mogg articulates the

view that France is the driving force behind the current treaty reform process (Rees-Mogg, *Mail*, 29 May 2005):

France regards herself as the true founder of the EU. The treaty itself, and the convention that preceded it, were negotiated under very strong French influence, with former president Valéry Giscard d'Estaing actually in the chair. The treaty bears the stamp of the French political class and of the Franco-German alliance.

Melanie Phillips argues that the 'French are the driving force behind the European supranational ideal' (Phillips, *Mail*, 30 May 2005). 'France has always been in the driving seat,' Phillips continues, 'telling other states what to do and rigging the EU rules to suit itself.' Elsewhere in the *Mail*, France is described as a 'powerhouse in Europe' (30 October 2004). Set against this powerhouse, Britain's ability to influence the institutions of the EU is seen in the right-wing press to be unfairly curtailed in comparison with that of the France. Trevor Kavanagh, meanwhile, rails against 'the snooty French' who, he argues, 'see themselves as Europe's born leaders' (Kavanagh, *Sun*, 10 June 2005 b). In a similar vein, Toby Helm claims that President Sarkozy 'regards Britain as France's junior partner on the European stage' (Helm, *Telegraph*, 6 June 2007).

Writing in the *Telegraph*, David Trimble comments that Britain's influence in the EU is 'quite limited' and argues that 'Europe has not gone 'Britain's way' (Trimble, *Telegraph*, 20 October 2007). By implication, the EU has gone the way of other member-states, such as France and Germany which present a competing vision of the EU and pursue a divergent set of interests.

At the root of the claim that the EU is run both by and for France is the belief that the EU itself is a French invention, geared to work in the French national interest. William Rees-Mogg argues that 'France regards herself as the true founder of the EU' (Rees-Mogg, *Mail*, 29 May 2005). This view is echoed by Peter Hitchens who argues that, since the EU was designed by the French, it was they who were best placed to benefit from the policies and institutions which emerged from the European integration process. What is more, the benefits enjoyed by France would come at the

expense of other member-states, most notably Britain (Hitchens, *Mail*, 15 May 2005):

The nation whose icy-brained bureaucrats devised the original European system was in the best position to make sure that it did well out of the rules. Charles de Gaulle kept Britain out of the Common Market in the Sixties mainly because he wanted to rig farming subsidies in France's favour for all time, and feared that British membership would get in the way of his plan. By the time we joined the deal was done, and it has stayed that way for more than 30 years.

In summary, the present section focused on the construction of France as an 'other' against which the UK is defined. The EU is presented as a French invention which is both controlled by France and works in the French national interest. In the following section it will be argued that the position of France as the predominant force (and the predominant beneficiary) in the EU is reinforced by the role of Germany and other long-standing member-states on whose support France is able to depend in its disputes with the British.

4.4 Britain, Germany and the EU

In the previous section it was argued that the EU is constructed in the eurosceptic discourse as a French invention, run both by and for the benefit of France. At other times, however, it is not the French who are seen to be running the EU, but the Germans. In this section, I will focus on the role Germany plays within the eurosceptic discourse. I shall focus on the way in which the position Germany occupies in relationship to the rivalry between France and Britain. The argument presented here is that France and Germany are seen to pursue a largely shared agenda. Consequently, France is able to rely on the support of Germany in its disputes with the UK over the EU budget and other issues. Furthermore, there is an equivalence constructed between the Franco-German position and that of the EU more generally, creating a separation between Britain on the one hand and the EU on the other.

4.4.1 *The EU as a German Plot*

At certain times, Germany is seen to be in control of the pace and direction of the treaty reform process. During Germany's presidency of the EU in the second half of 2007, the impression is given that it is Germany, not France, which is dictating both the direction and the pace of moves towards a new treaty. On 20 and 21 June 2007, a series of articles published in the *Mail* to coincide with a crucial European Council summit on the final draft of the Treaty of Lisbon focus on the fact that Germany has drawn up the draft reform treaty to be debated at the summit meeting and that Chancellor Merkel appears to be pushing other EU leaders towards a final agreement (Brogan, *Mail*, 20 June 2007; Heathcoat Amory, E, *Mail*, 21 June 2007; *Mail*, 21 June 2007).

However, the focus on the role of Germany in the last months of 2007 is part of a more general claim that Germany is the driving force behind the very process of European integration. On 18 October 2007, it is Germany which is described by the *Mail* as the 'architect' of the EU project (Chapman, *Mail*, 18 October 2007). Similarly, it is argued that the Constitutional Treaty would consolidate Germany's position of dominance in the EU. We learn that '[t]he new voting system enthrones Germany as the EU's dominant power, reflecting its 82 million population' (*Telegraph*, 21 June 2004).

The claim that the EU is a German creation, or that it is under German control, has sinister undertones in some of the reporting in the right-wing press. The EU is seen to be the latest manifestation of an inherent German desire to control Europe in its entirety. The issue of Germany's Nazi past is directly linked to the ongoing debates surrounding the Constitutional Treaty, which was still very much alive at the time this article was published. Referring to comments by the German ambassador to the UK, Thomas Matussek, about the depiction of Germany in the British media, one commentator argues that (Utlely, *Telegraph*, 13 May 2005):

Mr Matussek has a special reason for wanting Britons to stop mentioning the war quite as much as we do: his government is very anxious for the United Kingdom to sign up for the European Constitution.

If the reader were left in any doubt about the implications of this statement, it is immediately removed in the following sentence in which we are told that:

one of the most powerful factors stopping us [from adopting the Constitution] is our knowledge of how the Germans behaved between Hitler's election in 1933 and his suicide in 1945. We know that the last man who tried to impose supra-national authority on Europe was Adolf.

The rhetoric in the above article is quite breathtaking in its crassness, yet it can be argued it is merely a more direct statement of the concerns underlying many of arguments made in the right-wing press against the deepening of European integration and against British membership of the EU. The fear appears to be that European integration in the form of the Constitutional Treaty will simply hand more power over British affairs to the Germans, whose ultimate goal is to gain complete control of the UK and the rest of the EU. Germany, in other words, is attempting to achieve now through the EU what it failed to do through military conquest in the first half of the 20th century.

This point is made abundantly clear by the following evaluation of the Constitutional Treaty by Melanie Phillips of the *Mail* (Phillips, *Mail*, 12 May 2003):

This constitution is simply nothing less than a blueprint for tyranny. It would mean the end of our independence and the tearing up of 1,000 years of history. We went to war to prevent such a calamity from engulfing our country. What Hitler failed to do, Europe is now proposing to bring about by edict - this time with the connivance of the British Government.

Here it is implied that the EU poses the same danger to British freedom and democracy as Nazi Germany, and the negotiations over the treaty are a threat to British independence of the same magnitude and significance as WW2.

Further evidence of the suspicion and cynicism with which both Germany and the EU are treated is provided by the Chairman of the Parliamentary European

Scrutiny Select Committee, Michael Connarty. His comments on the draft Lisbon Treaty were widely reported within all three newspapers analysed in the present chapter. In response to Foreign Secretary David Milliband's evidence to the committee, Connarty responded that he had 'visions of "peace in our time"' when he heard Mr Milliband speak (Brogan and Chapman, *Mail*, 17 October 2007; Helm and Waterfield, *Telegraph*, 17 October 2007; Wilson, *Sun*, 17 October 2007). In case readers were in any doubt, Graeme Wilson reminds them that this is, 'a reference to the infamous phrase Prime Minister Mr Chamberlain used when he flew back from talks with Adolf Hitler in 1938 and declared there would be no war with Germany' (Wilson, *Sun*, 17 October 2007). The clear implication of this is that the UK faces a threat to its independence from German expansionism equivalent to that which it faced in the 1930's.

A similar reference to WW2 is made by Simon Heffer. He leaves us in absolutely no doubt about the connection he sees between the Nazi regime in Germany and the EU as the latest embodiment of the long standing threat posed to British freedom and independence by the European continent. He argues that a proposed European holiday which was mooted for inclusion within the constitutional treaty should be celebrated on April 20, 'the anniversary of the birth of the man whose vision of an undemocratic united Europe of subject peoples seems to have inspired the new constitution - Adolf Hitler' (Heffer, *Mail*, 12 July 2003).

The idea that the EU is simply the latest attempt by hostile neighbours to exert their influence across the Channel is one to which Heffer return on more than one occasion. Referring to comments by Government Minister Peter Hain, calling the proposed constitutional Treaty a 'tidying up exercise,' he comments (Heffer, *Mail*, 17 May 2003):

I have been thinking of other great 'tidyings up' in European history. There was the way William the Conqueror 'tidied up' England in 1066. Or the way revolutionaries 'tidied up' France after 1789. Or the way Hitler 'tidied up' Poland in September 1939.

These articles assume that ‘the Germans’ by their very nature are not to be trusted and harbour deep-seated expansionist goals, which will inevitably resurface at some point. In this light, the EU is little more than an attempt to achieve through other means what the Nazis were unable to do during WW2, namely bringing the entire continent under their control.

4.4.2 The Franco-German Alliance

It was argued above that there is a fundamental divide created between the French and British visions of the EU. These states, it was argued, have differing (and mutually exclusive) sets of interests which they pursue within the framework of the EU institutions. However, the rivalry between the UK and France is not a meeting of equals within a politically neutral institutional framework. France, as a founder member of the EU, is seen to wield disproportionate influence, making laws in its own interests which it forces on other member-states, such as the UK, whilst ignoring those measures which run counter to its own interests. Consequently, France is seen in the right-wing press to benefit disproportionately from the policies pursued by the EU, while Britain is forced to pick up the tab.

The argument presented in this section is that France is also able to draw on the support of Germany and other allies in order to pursue policy aims and its vision of the EU. As well as there being a fundamental divide constructed between France and Britain within the EU, there appears to be an equivalence created between the interests of France and Germany. The alliance between these countries is seen as the motor driving forward and providing the direction of the very process of EU integration. As Toby Helm comments, ‘[t]he analogy in Brussels has always been that if you stop pedalling the euro-bike you fall off. So the bike has sped on, with France and Germany pumping away towards deeper economic and political unity’ (Helm, *Telegraph*, 18 June 2005).

However, the vision of the EU pursued by France and Germany is at odds with that of the UK. Faced with a hostile coalition of France and her ally Germany, the UK is forced to fight tooth and nail for its own interests. For this reason, the *Mail*

informs us, 'even the most pro-EU governments end up in angry megaphone confrontations with Paris and Berlin over power or money, and often over both' (*Mail*, June 12 2005). In a similar vein, John Kampfner (Kampfner, *Telegraph*, 5 June 2005) comments that:

Our mandarins and politicians have over the years been guided by two goals- an immediate requirement to fight our corner on each and every issue and a long-term aim to weaken the Franco-German axis on which the European Union was founded.

The idea clearly emerges that the EU is driven forward by an agenda dictated by France and Germany, which is merely presented to other member-states such as the UK as a *fait accompli*. As David Rennie comments (Rennie, *Telegraph*, 3 June 2005):

It is one of the grandest traditions of the European project: on the eve of any EU summit, the leaders of France and Germany meet to thrash out a joint approach, before descending, like gods from Olympus, to tell the other nations what they have agreed

The same point is made in more prosaic terms in a *Sun* editorial the previous summer, which claims that 'France's President Chirac and Germany's Chancellor Schroeder will try to stitch up a deal on the Constitution that no one wants' (*Sun*, 15 June 2004).

The coverage in the right-wing press appears to drive a wedge between the UK on the one hand, and the Franco-German alliance on the other. As the apparent division between France and the UK over the issue of the Constitutional Treaty and the EU budget intensifies, it becomes apparent that it is French and not the British government which can call on the support of Germany in this dispute. The *Mail* editorial on 7 June 2005 reports that both France and Germany are blaming the British government for the referendum fiasco and will target the British rebate as a form of payback (*Mail*, 7 June 2005). A similar line is repeated in both the *Mail* and the *Telegraph* on several occasions in the days immediately preceding and following the article cited here (see, for example, Brogan, *Mail*, 6 June 2005; *Mail*, 8 June 2005

a; Carlin, *Telegraph*, 7 June 2005). In the *News of the World* too there is evidence of the Franco-German alliance over the issue of the EU budget. We are told that 'French President Jacques Chirac plotted with Germany last night to rescue the European constitution AND stop Britain's rebate' (*NOTW*, 5 June 2005 a).

At other times, it appears instead that the UK is locked in battle with the Franco-German alliance, and a varying constellation of other allies, over the control of certain dimensions of EU policy. The *Sun* argues that negotiations are stalled because of 'France, Germany and Belgium demanding that Britain be given fewer concessions' (*Sun*, 18 June 2004). As the process of treaty negotiation continues, Nic Cecil comments that the 'growing ties between France, Spain and Germany left Mr Blair with fewer allies in Europe' (Cecil, *Sun*, 6 November 2004).

Helm and Evans-Pritchard, meanwhile, states that 'France, Spain and Germany launched a "triple axis" yesterday aimed at taking charge of EU foreign policy and limiting Tony Blair's influence in Europe' (Helm and Evans-Pritchard, *Telegraph*, 7 November 2004; see also Eastham, *Mail*, 6 November 2004). The attempt by Spain, France and Germany to adopt closer positions on defence policy is seen as a deliberate attempt by these countries to weaken Britain. This point is echoed in the *Sun* in more colourful terms, in which Nic Cecil presents the events as an attempt by France and Germany to assert control over British defence policy (Cecil, *Sun*, 6 November 2004):

A secret EU plot to wreck NATO and torpedo the UK's influence in Europe was sensationally laid bare by Spain's Prime Minister yesterday. He vowed his country would stand shoulder to shoulder with fellow Iraq war weasels France and Germany - to dictate a common EU defence policy that would leave Britain sidelined.

The prominence of the Franco-German alliance, and the threat that this seemingly poses to British national interests is clearly evident in the process of negotiating the Constitutional Treaty and the Treaty of Lisbon. The effect is to position the UK on the margins of the EU in which power is wielded by an alliance of France and Germany.

4.5 The 'Core' and 'Periphery' of the EU

In the previous section, it was argued that the image of a strong Franco-German alliance as the driving force behind the European integration project is frequently reproduced in the right-wing press. In the present section, I argue that in the eurosceptic discourse, the alliance between France and Germany forms the basis of a broader coalition of states at the heart of the EU. The idea of a 'core' Europe emerges, an inner circle of countries, under Franco-German leadership, which occupy a privileged position within the EU. The UK, by contrast, is confined to the margins of the EU decision making process and is unable to wield the political influence enjoyed by core member-states.

4.5.1 'Core' Europe

The existence of an inner-core of European states is hinted at by William Rees-Mogg in a passage quoted above in which he contrasts the position towards the Constitutional Treaty of both 'the French political class' and 'the Franco-German alliance' with that of the UK and the Scandinavian countries (Rees-Mogg, *Mail*, 29 May 2005). Tellingly, he describes as the latter 'outer-Europeans.' The existence of 'outer' Europeans, however, implies the existence also of 'inner' Europeans. In the above passage, the latter term would appear to be synonymous with France and Germany.

On a similar note, James Chapman in the *Mail* reports Tony Blair's call for the end to Franco-German domination of Europe and rejects the idea of multi-speed Europe in which there would be an 'inner' and an 'outer' core within the EU (Chapman, *Mail*, 15 October 2004). Nevertheless, there appears to be precisely such an asymmetry in power within the EU as it currently stands. A *Telegraph* leader published during the budget negotiations comments, for example, that Prime Minister Blair 'remains outside of the EU's magic circle' (*Telegraph*, 19 June 2005). David Rennie, also writing in the *Telegraph*, declares that Britain has been 'branded the black sheep of the EU' by France over its stance on the budget and the Constitutional Treaty (Rennie, *Telegraph*, 15 June 2005).

The impression is created of Britain, despite its size and economic strength, being an outsider in the EU, unable to punch its weight within the Union's institutions and incapable of influencing the decisions they take. The failed attempt by Tony Blair to nominate Chris Patten as President of the European Commission in June 2005, was seen to be further evidence of the UK's marginalisation through the apparent exclusion of its nationals from the highest-ranking offices within the EU. Patten's candidature, it is alleged, was rejected on the grounds that such a role would be inappropriate for someone from a member-state not participating in all EU policy areas, such as the Euro and other areas included within the Constitutional Treaty on which the UK had negotiated opt-outs. This was seen within the right-wing press as a clear example of prejudice against the UK and evidence of a deliberate attempt by France and Germany to marginalise the UK and restrict her influence within the EU. As Ambrose Evans-Pritchard reports (Evans-Pritchard, *Telegraph*, 22 June 2004):

Germany joined France yesterday to insist that Britain and other "non-core" countries should be barred from proposing candidates for president of the European Commission

Berlin's spokesman, Bela Anda, raised hackles in half of the EU's capitals by suggesting that the post in charge of Europe's policy-making engine be reserved for members of the "Old Europe" club.

For a while it would allow Germany and France to keep control of the EU machinery despite being part of a minority group within the enlarged bloc of 25 states. As the East European states join the euro it would leave Britain isolated on the margins.

The above quotation is interesting for it not only introduces the idea of a 'core' Europe and a 'non-core' Europe, but it links this to a clear political marginalisation of the non-core states within the EU. Evans-Pritchard implies also that the 'core' European states remain under Franco-German leadership, since it is argued that a candidate from 'core' member-state would reinforce Franco-German control over the EU machinery. In addition, it links these identity positions with the idea of 'old' and 'new' Europe which will be examined in further detail below

Whilst the unwillingness of France and other member-states to accept Patten as Commission President due to the UK's non-participation in certain EU policies

may indeed be unfair and contravene the EU's own rules and procedures for selecting such officials,⁸ it must also be recognised that this anomalous situation only arises because of the special dispensations granted to the UK over a sustained period of time in order to safeguard areas of policy deemed to be politically unacceptable to the UK or of such crucial national interest that its special interests had to be recognised. Opt-outs were granted at Maastricht not only on participation in EMU, but also on social policy and labour market regulation (although Tony Blair later reversed the decision of his predecessor John Major and signed the UK up to the Social Chapter of the Treaty on European Union). However, this issue receives scant attention in the treatment of the Patten affair in the right-wing press. The focus is instead on the supposed prejudice exercised towards the UK by its European partners.

4.5.2 'Old' Europe v 'New' Europe

The preceding sections of this chapter highlighted the way in which a divide is constructed between France and the UK in terms of the interest they pursue within the EU. It was argued that France is able to draw on the support of Germany and that these two countries form a powerful alliance which is able to guide the EU in the direction which best suits their interests. A distinction emerges within the right-wing press between core member-states, such as France, Germany and their allies on the one hand, and peripheral states such as the UK on the other. In this section, I aim to draw together these points by analysing the way in which the relationship between Britain, France and Germany maps on to the distinction between 'old Europe,' under French leadership and 'new Europe,' under British leadership.

This distinction between 'old' and 'new' Europe was first made by US Secretary of Defence, Donald Rumsfeld, in the lead up to the US-led invasion of Iraq in 2003. For Rumsfeld, the dividing line between 'old' and 'new' centred on European states' support or opposition to the Iraq war; the terminology employed being a reference to the fact that it was mainly longer-standing members of the EU

⁸ Nowhere in the treaties does it say that the Commission President must be from a country participating in a specific policy area such as, for example, Economic and Monetary Union.

who opposed the war, whilst newer, principally East European member-states who at the time were still to accede to the EU tended, in the main, to support the US position. However, within the debates about the EU in the right-wing press, the terms ‘old’ and ‘new’ Europe refer not simply to the positions adopted towards the Iraq war but appear to connote broader set of views about management of the economy, the role of the state, and the position of ‘Europe’ vis-à-vis the USA and emerging powers such as China and India.

Although the specific membership of each grouping remains vague and imprecisely defined, the subject positions of ‘old’ and ‘new’ Europe which emerge within the discussions of the EU appear once again to pitch the UK on the one hand against France and Germany on the other. ‘Old’ Europe consists of the founder members of the EEC, under Franco-Germany leadership, which are statist and Eurocentric. ‘New’ Europe, led by the UK, comprises the CEECs and other member-states which are Atlanticist or internationalist in outlook and are broadly sympathetic to the British stance on economic issues and the need for economic reform in Europe.

David Rennie, for example, comments that Prime Minister Tony Blair ‘appeared to be positioning himself as a champion of the poor, eastern countries that joined the EU last year’ (Rennie, *Telegraph*, 18 June 2005). Similarly, the terms ‘old’ and ‘new’ Europe were also employed by Former conservative party Leader Iain Duncan Smith in a speech on the future of the EU delivered, symbolically, in Prague in 2003. The *Telegraph* reported at the time how ‘the Tory leader called for a “new Europe” to take over from the “old Europe” of the EU’s main founders, France and Germany, which he accused of trying to “bully” Britain and the rest of the union (*Telegraph*, 28 July 2003).

The concept of ‘old’ Europe seems to imply tired regimes whose policies are rooted in the past and are out of touch from the modern world. In many respects, the critique of ‘old’ Europe maps on to the critique of the supposedly outdated continental economic model and world view. ‘Old’ Europe is seen both in terms of economics and foreign policy to be introspective and inward-looking. ‘New’ Europe,

and the UK in particular, are the complete antithesis of the tired and cumbersome bloc, whose malaise is personified in the form of its leading protagonists. David Rennie, in the article cited above, observes how, at the summit in question, '[y]outh and clear-eyed reforming zeal was the British theme – in sharp contrast to the tired old men of continental Europe, like 72 year-old president Chirac' (Rennie, *Telegraph*, 18 June 2005).

'Old' Europe is seen as representing what may be broadly described as the EU establishment, a vague entity which is often captured by the term 'Brussels' within media debates. 'Old' Europe is able to call on the support of the institutions of the EU and, in particular, the European Commission, as well as influential figures within the EU hierarchy. The connection between 'old' Europe and the EU establishment is made clear by the *Telegraph* editorial on 13 June 2005. Discussing the EU's response to referendums in France and the Netherlands, it attempts to draw attention to the smoke screen being created by the ongoing budgetary negotiations. It implores us to:

...turn our heads instead to what the leaders of old Europe have been getting up to under the cover of this row about money. The most striking thing is that the EU institutions are pushing ahead as though the No votes never happened. The leaders of the Commission, the Parliament and the Council have called for ratification to proceed as planned.

This passage is insightful not simply because it highlights the different positions on the ratification process adopted by the UK from most other member-states, but because of the equivalence constructed between 'old' Europe and the institutions listed above. The latter are seen to be the mouth pieces of 'old' Europe, pushing their agenda forwards and representing their interests.

This equivalence constructed between 'old' Europe and the EU institutions was also evident in the negotiations surrounding the EU budget when the President of the European Council, Jean-Claude Juncker of Luxembourg, was seen as representing the interests of France and Germany rather than playing the role of honest broker between the two sides. Similarly, in the wake of the French and Dutch

referenda on the EU constitution, we are told that Prime Minister Tony Blair is desperate to convince ‘Brussels, France and Germany’ that the Constitutional Treaty must now be abandoned (Eastham, *Mail*, 7 June 2005). A division is thus created between the EU officials and the two most politically important member-states on the one hand, and the UK on the other over the future direction of the Union.

The countries of ‘new’ Europe, under the leadership of the UK, are positioned as the outsiders in the EU, or the challengers to the EU establishment. On 18 June 2004, the *Telegraph* carries quotes from one of Tony Blair’s spokesmen at the time of the final negotiations on the text of the Constitutional Treaty, which seem to confirm the idea that, for some national leaders at least, their states are more equal than others. In a clear reference to the founding member-states, and to France and Germany in particular, the idea that the UK is treated as a second-class member of the EU is put forward in no uncertain terms. As the official comments:

What we all have to accept is that we live in a Europe of 25, not a Europe of six or two or one. There are no first-class or second-class citizens, we are all equal members of the European community (sic).

The UK, it would appear, is not afforded the same rights and privileges as either France or Germany or the inner core of ‘old’ Europe they represent.

4.5.3 The UK’s Special Treatment

Whilst the newspapers analysed here are quick to condemn the EU and its apparently unfair treatment of the UK, they are less willing (or less able) to recognise the preferential treatment which the UK receives in other areas. Indeed a feature of the coverage of EU in the right-wing press is the almost complete failure to recognise the benefits which the UK receives from EU membership and the special treatment, which the British government itself has been afforded in its negotiations with its European partners over the past two decades in terms of opt-outs and derogations from certain policies such as EMU and the UK’s rebate on budget contributions. The latter is of course of particular relevance to any discussions of the allegedly unfair

financial burden placed on the UK to fund policies in the interests of other member-states.

The very fact that the UK has been able to secure such opt-outs from the TEU, as well as from the Constitutional Treaty should be seen as a sign of the strength of the UK bargaining position and the ability of the British government to represent and defend its interests within the EU. The opt-outs the UK has secured are indeed hard won and go against the instincts of other national leaders as well as Commission President Barroso. According to reports, Barroso agreed very reluctantly to Britain's opt-outs from certain aspects of the Lisbon Treaty, and only out fear that not doing so would make a final agreement on the treaty text impossible to achieve (see Porter, *Telegraph*, 16 October 2007).

There is a sense of righteous indignation in the right-wing press about the perceived advantages in terms of their power and influence enjoyed by other member-states such as France. However, it is taken for granted that the UK should be able to pick and chose what parts of the European integration project in which it participates so as to maximise its interests and minimise any potentially negative externalities. David Trimble and Martin Howe QC make precisely this point in their respective articles in the *Telegraph*, suggesting that the UK take the good things from 'Europe' whilst abandoning those aspects of the integration projects not to its liking or not in its interest (see Trimble, *Telegraph*, 20 October 2007; Howe *Telegraph*, 19 October 2007).

Little attention is paid to the sense of annoyance and anger which may be aroused by the perception that the UK takes from the club, but contributes little in return. The concerns of other member-states, and the duties that Britain may have to them and the EU more generally as a result of its membership of the organisation, are simply not considered. The sense of exasperation with the British 'pick and choose' approach to European integration is not limited to the political class but is expressed in much the same way by a French trawlerman who, despite his own antipathy for the EU, complained that the English are not good Europeans on the grounds that '[t]hey take the good from Europe but not the bad' (Rennie, *Telegraph*, 5 May 2005).

Yet here the position articulated by the person in question is presented not as a legitimate complaint about British European policy, but as an example of the apparent eccentricity of French political culture.

The discussion in the right-wing press about of the costs and benefits of EU membership for the UK presents the EU as a club run by France and her ally Germany for their own self-interest and against that of the UK. At the same time the preferential treatment received by the UK is downplayed or taken for granted, conferring upon the UK a special status in the minds of many commentators in which its ought to be able to dictate its own terms of membership to the rest of the EU.

4.6 The Fantasmatic Dimension

It was argued above that there is a fundamental divide constructed between France and the UK in terms of their respective visions of the EU, the influence each is able to exert over EU policies and institutions, and the costs and benefits which accrue to them as a result. At certain times France functions as an ‘other’ against which the British position within the EU (*qua* inter-national competition) is constructed. At other times, Britain is contrasted against an alliance of France and Germany, or a coalition of other member-states which is identified variously as ‘core’ Europe and ‘old’ Europe. In this section, I argue that the Lacanian concept of fantasy can be employed to understand the way in which France, the Franco-German alliance and ‘core’ Europe function as identity positions within the discursive construction of Britain and the EU.

It will be recalled that the Lacanian conception of nationalism is inextricably linked to the category of ‘enjoyment’ (*jouissance*). The process through which the nation and its relationship to the ‘other’ is constructed centres around the issue of enjoyment. What defines the nation is the unique way in which it organises its enjoyment (Bracher, 1996); yet this national enjoyment is under constant threat from the presence of the ‘other’ whose aims and motivations remain hidden from us.

According to the eurosceptic discourse, France uses the EU as a means for pursuing their national interest, and with great success: EU policies are seen overwhelmingly to favour France and her allies. Since EU-level politics is seen as a zero-sum game: any benefits which France receives from the EU come at the direct expense of other member-states, and the UK in particular. Consequently, France functions as a barrier to the achievement of the British national interest in the areas highlighted above: the political control of the EU institutions, a favourable budget settlement and policy agenda, and a system of legal implementation similar to that which exists in the UK. Similarly, where France is seen to act in cooperation with Germany (and other member-states), their common interests are constructed in direct opposition to those of the UK. Again, any benefits derived from the EU by this coalition are seen to come at the expense of the UK.

The EU is, therefore, the institutionalisation of Britain's subjugation to France and her allies, and an obvious barrier to achieving its national 'mission.' The idea persists in the analysis presented this chapter, as in previous chapters, that if the UK were to leave the EU it would be free to pursue its own interests, without the costs and impediments imposed by 'Brussels'. To put this in Lacanian terms, the EU functions as an impediment to the full realisation of the shared national 'enjoyment' peculiar to the British. The coverage of the EU in the right-wing press, therefore, imputes to France the theft of British 'enjoyment'. In this sense, the relationship between Britain on the one hand, and France and her allies has on the other has the structure of the basic racist/ nationalist fantasy outlined by Žižek (1993: 200-205).

To understand the full significance of Lacanian theory for this project and the weight that fantasy is able to lend to nationalist discourses, it is necessary to remind ourselves of the function of fantasy in the Lacanian conceptual architecture. As was argued in Chapter 2, the role of fantasy is to mask over the ultimate contingency of all social relations. The fantasmatic object symbolises an absent communitarian fullness, capable of conferring on the individual the fully-constituted identity, associated with the primal *jouissance* of the Real. In this sense, fantasy is the manifestation of the Real in the symbolic order.

Nationalist discourses and eurosceptic discourses function as precisely this kind of fantasy structure, offering the subject the (ultimately false) hope of a stable identity centred around the nation as an organic and fully-constituted society. Jason Glynos and David Howarth (2007: 147) have argued that fantasmatic narratives are often structured around the idea of a mythical ‘fullness-to-come,’ currently precluded by the presence of a particular obstacle (see also Žižek, 1998: 210; Stavrakakis, 2005: 73). If only this impediment could be removed, then society (and identity) would be possible. From the analysis presented above, this appears to be the form to which the constructions of the EU, and the relationship between Britain and the other EU member-states, adhere in the right-wing press. France and her allies are the impediment to a mythical communitarian fullness which could be realised if only Britain were free from the shackles they impose on her through the EU.

The conceptions of *jouissance* and fantasy bring a level of insight above and beyond a purely discursive analysis of identity constructions since they focus on the emotional and psychological investment of the individual in certain discursive and narrative structures. However, it is necessary to consider the traumatic nature of this confrontation with the Real. According to Žižek (1993: 206), the confrontation with the ‘other’ is traumatic not because it bars us from achieving the identity from which they block us off, but because it brings us face-to-face with the ultimate impossibility of such an identity. It reminds us that the enjoyment allegedly stolen from us was never ours in the first place and never can be. By imputing to France (and her allies) an excessive enjoyment, the supposed theft of ‘our’ enjoyment, we are brought face to face with our own alienation from the Real.

4.7 Concluding Remarks

The argument presented above is that the eurosceptic discourse of British national identity is grounded in a narrow, nationalist conception of politics and society in which nations are seen as natural and organic political communities. Political organisation at the supra-national level, as represented by the EU, is thus

seen to contravene the natural order of things. Citizens are cued to view politics through the lens of this exclusionary account of the nation, and to construct their identity in exclusively national terms.

In addition, we are presented with an account of EU level politics in which Britain's interests run counter to those of other member-states and are systematically marginalised. Politics at the EU level is constructed in term of the nation-state, and the EU is seen as a forum for international bargaining in which member-states compete in a zero-sum game for political and economic advantage. However, this competition does not occur on a level playing field. There is an asymmetry of power between different members of the EU. The UK, it is argued, is consigned to the periphery of the EU, dominated by France and Germany.

The Franco-German position on any issue is seen to have the support of a core group of member-states and, as EU 'insiders', they are also able to draw on the support of supranational actors such as the European Commission. As such, France and Germany are seen in the eurosceptic press as representing not simply a rival position to the UK, but to be speaking on behalf of the EU more generally. Since the interests of France and her allies are presented as being synonymous with those of the EU more generally, the divide constructed within the right-wing press between France and Germany on the one hand, and the UK on the other, is not simply a divide between different member-states, but a separation between the UK and the EU itself.

The image of EU membership as detrimental to the interests of the UK is supported by fantasies of suppression and marginalisation and the hands of the EU establishment. The latter reinforce both the construction of Britain as separate from the EU, and the exclusively national subject positions which emerge within this discourse. This, it is argued, can account not only for the pervasiveness of exclusively national identities amongst British citizens, but for the scepticism with which the EU is viewed more generally.

5. Britain's European 'Other'

The argument presented in this chapter is that, within the eurosceptic discourse, the EU is constructed as an external entity, entirely separate from the UK. The EU functions as the 'other' in opposition to which a particular construction of Britain is defined. In each section I examine a different aspect of the processes through which this relationship is instituted and maintained, and the fantasmatic support structures which underlie this system of relationships. It will be argued that, through the construction of antagonistic equivalential chains, Britain and the EU are constructed in radical opposition to one another. Each is presented as being a unified and internally homogenous entity in which internal differences and conflicts are downplayed, and the heterogeneity of each from the other is brought to the fore. Whilst the logics of equivalence and difference can account for the structure of the eurosceptic discourse, the fantasmatic dimension of this relationship, it will be argued, is able to account for the emotive power of these constructions of Britain and the EU.

The analysis in this chapter draws heavily on the arguments presented in Chapter 4. The depiction of the EU in Sections 5.2, 5.3 and 5.4 in particular provide additional support for the argument set out in the previous chapter that British debates surrounding the EU are founded on an underlying ideology of nationalism (see Billig, 1995). The terminology and the concepts available with which to think about and discuss EU-level politics are those developed in relation to the state. Consequently, the EU is often constructed in such a way that renders it amenable to examination within these limited conceptual horizons. The result of this, however, is that debates about the EU offer a stylised and highly contestable account of what the EU is and how it functions. The EU is represented either, as it was argued in Chapter 4, as simply a forum for inter-state bargaining or, as will be argued in this chapter, as an emerging state in its own right. There appears to be no middle ground. The poverty of our conceptual vocabulary is such that we are unable to step out of these narrow parameters and fully understand the complexity of the institutions and practices which make up the EU.

This chapter begins, in Section 5.1, by examining the way in which Britain is positioned in relation to the EU, and the metonymic representations of the EU as ‘Europe’ and ‘Brussels.’ The argument presented in this section is that the UK is positioned outside of the EU and occupies a position akin to that of a neighbouring state, rather than an integral member of the EU. Through the use of the terms ‘Brussels’ and ‘Europe,’ the EU is presented as a unitary and internally homogenous entity which is entirely separate from the UK and with which the UK is engaged in a bilateral relationship.

In Section 5.2, I document the construction of the EU as a ‘foreign power’ which is seen to be entirely separate from the UK. In section 5.3, it will be argued that the EU is constructed not only as a foreign entity, but also a hostile and threatening presence across the channel. The EU is presented as being a quasi-colonial power bent on assuming control over an ever increasing range of policy competences and aspects of British life. Section 5.4 details the way in which the EU is constructed as an emerging, trans-continental superstate. Here, the idea of control and domination of the UK by the EU developed in the previous section continues, although the metaphor shifts from one of imperial conquest to the subsumption of the UK within a European state. Finally, Section 5.5 examines the construction of the EU as a cultural (as opposed to a political or economic) entity and examines the way in which it functions as the radical ‘other’ against which a distinct set of British cultural norms emerges.

5.1 Positioning Britain and ‘Europe’

The argument presented in this section is that in the media debates surrounding the EU constitutional reform process, Britain is positioned outside of the EU. The latter is constructed as a unitary actor more akin to a neighbouring state than an international organisation of which the UK is a member. Britain is constructed as an entirely separate entity from the EU, and is seen to engage in bilateral relationship with the EU in the same way it maintains similar relationships with other states. The

apparent separation of the UK from the EU is reflected, it will be argued, not only in the terminology in which debates surrounding the EU are conducted, but also in the substantive content of these debates. In much of the right-wing press the possibility of the UK ceding from the EU is openly discussed and the benefits of EU membership are called into question.

5.1.1 Brussels and 'Europe'

The construction of Britain and the EU as separate and distinct entities depends on the construction of the EU as an internally homogenous actor. This occurs at least in part through the metonymic representation of the EU through the terms 'Europe' and 'Brussels.' As Laclau (2005) has argued, the act of naming plays a crucial role in the emergence of an equivalential chain. Through the use of the terms 'Europe' and 'Brussels' in this context, the impression is created that the EU is a single entity able to speak with one voice on any given issue rather than a disparate collection of institutions and actors. The internal differences which may exist between different EU institutions, member-states, or regions within member-states are played down at the expense of their common identity as 'European.'

This is a clear example of the logic of equivalence at work and its predominance over the logic of difference. The equivalential ties that bind the disparate elements of the EU together are privileged over the differential identity positions which coexist alongside them. The characteristic that links these different identity positions together in a single equivalential chain is their radical heterogeneity from the idea of Britishness, which is constructed as the antithesis of 'Europeanness.'

The separation constructed between Britain and the EU (or its metonymic representations as 'Brussels' or 'Europe') can be seen in the eurosceptic discourse at the most basic linguistic level. The signifiers 'Europe' and 'the EU' are employed to refer not to the EU in its entirety, but to a rump EU, which excludes Britain and is engaged in a bilateral relationship with it. The very fact that it is possible in the British context to talk about a bilateral relationship between the EU and the UK is

indicative of the oppositional terms in which EU politics is presented and the feeling of apartness which permeates the political discourse surrounding Britain's engagement with the EU.

Reference is made throughout the media coverage of the treaty reform process to 'Britain's relationship *with* Europe' (*Telegraph*, 15 June 2004 b, emphasis added) and to transfers of powers '*to* the European Union' (*Telegraph*, 25 June 2006, emphasis added). Similarly, there is talk of a 'transfer of sovereignty from Westminster to Brussels' (Helm, *Telegraph* 2 October 2007). In the *Mail* too, this linguistic pattern is repeated. On 22 June 2003, for example we learn that 'Tony Blair's pledge to stop more powers being transferred *from* Westminster *to* Brussels was doomed to fail' (*Mail*, 22 June 2003, emphasis added). On 14 June 2004, the *Mail* argues in a similar vein that the Constitutional Treaty will lead Britain to 'surrender a raft of additional powers *to* Brussels' (*Mail*, 14 June 2004, emphasis added). On 3 October 2007, an article in the *Mail* again refers to 'transfers of powers to Brussels' and of competences being passed from Britain to the EU (Chapman, *Mail*, 3 October 2007). Similar terminology is employed also in the *Sun*, with constant reference to the transfer of powers from Britain to the EU. Ian Kirby highlights how Tony Blair 'is under fire for handing over more powers *to* Brussels' (Kirby, *Sun*, 22 June 2003, emphasis added). Similarly, George Pascoe-Watson tells readers that '[t]he constitution would also see the UK surrender huge swathes of power to Brussels' (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 19 May 2005).

In the same way that it is argued powers can be transferred to Brussels from the UK, the call is also made for their return or repatriation to the UK from Brussels (Chapman, *Mail*, 15 October 2004; Heffer, *Mail*, 13 May 2005). The fact that powers can be transferred to the EU from the UK (and vice versa) assumes that a dichotomy exists between the two levels of governance and that the latter is excluded from, and thus exercises no influence within, the former. In the *Sun*, the call for powers to be repatriated from the EU to the UK is less frequent, although it does run an article by Michael Howard in which he promises any future Conservative administration would do precisely this (Howard, *Sun*, 10 June 2004).

In the passages cited above, the idea is created of an internally homogeneous European ‘other,’ with a distinct set of interests, with which the UK must engage, but of which it is not part. The relationship between Britain and the EU is also seen as a zero-sum game in which power resides either with the UK or with the EU. There is no sense in which the involvement of the EU in a certain area of policy implies shared interests or a pooling of sovereignty amongst member-states in the institutions of the EU.

5.1.2 Secession from the EU

An additional example of Britain’s semi-detachment from the EU is the ongoing debate in the right-wing press about Britain’s membership of the EU. Over 30 years after Britain's accession to the EU, it appears that certain sections of the British public have still not accepted that this is where the UK's destiny ought to lie, and there continue to be calls for the UK’s withdrawal from the EU. Whilst there is an acceptance that Britain's economic ties with the EU are significant, and that continued membership of the Single Market is in the British national interest, scepticism remains about the value of Britain remaining a full member of the EU given the obligations this is seen to place upon it. This body of thought is given a regular platform within the right-wing press. The *Mail* (12 June 2005), follows a highly critical assessment of Britain’s position with the EU by asking ‘if there is any point in Britain belonging to this organisation any longer.’

In addition, the *Telegraph* ran a series of articles in October 2007, as the final details of the Lisbon Treaty were being agreed, in which the feasibility and desirability of the UK's withdrawal from the EU were debated. In the first of these articles, Ruth Lea, Director of campaigning group *Global Vision*, put the case for looser ties with the EU on the grounds that this would be advantageous for British industry, freeing it from the burdensome regulation which emanates from the EU (Lea, *Telegraph*, 16 October 2007).

The following day Norman Lamont – the former Chancellor of the Exchequer who presided over the Britain's withdrawal from the Exchange Rate Mechanism (ERM) on 'Black Wednesday' – argues in a similar vein for looser ties with the EU on economic grounds; citing the benefits of trade with the EU whilst calling for the British government to free itself from the supposed costs associated with full EU membership (Lamont, *Telegraph*, 17 October 2007).

Martin Howe QC, then examines the legal ramifications of ceding from the EU, and the basis on which the UK could construct a new relationship with the EU which maintains close ties with the latter, but falls short of full membership (Howe, *Telegraph*, 19 October 2007). Finally, David Trimble makes the political case for Britain to renegotiate its relationship with the EU on the basis that this would give the UK government greater control over domestic policy and also greater influence internationally (Trimble, *Telegraph*, 20 October 2007).

Despite the difference in emphasis between these articles, they seem to be united in their view that Britain's relationship 'with' the EU is valuable to the UK, at least in economic terms, given the volume of trade which occurs between Britain and the rest of the EU. Nevertheless, there seems to be an equal consensus that there are political costs associated with full EU membership which outweigh the benefits the UK gains from its access to the single market. Above all there is a concern about over-regulation in the field of social and labour market policies, which undermines the flexibility and dynamism of the UK economy.

There seems to be a consensus amongst the commentators cited above that Britain could enjoy the benefits of the single market without necessarily remaining a full member of the EU and thus bearing the costs which it is argued are associated with this. Countries such as Norway and Switzerland provide a precedent which the UK could follow in redefining its relationship with the EU. Peter Hitchens lauds Switzerland as a wealthy and fiercely independent state, whose lead the UK could follow were it to leave the EU (Hitchens, *Mail*, 21 October 2007).

Both countries are small, wealthy and enjoy close relations with the EU through membership of the European Economic Area (EEA) in the case of Norway and the European Free Trade Area (EFTA) in the case of Switzerland. Both have also accepted various aspects of the *acquis communautaire* including the Schengen Agreement which removes passport controls at internal borders within the EU and between the EU and certain EEA members such as Norway, Switzerland and Iceland. Somewhat ironically, the UK itself has actually obtained opt out from the Schengen Agreement despite being a member of the EU. Thus, in this specific, the Swiss and the Norwegians have moved further along the path of integration than the UK, despite rejecting the opportunity to become full EU members.

The feasibility and desirability of Britain's secession from the EU is an issue which must be left for others to debate. In terms of the present study, however, the articles cited above (and similar arguments made elsewhere within the British media) are of importance for what they tell us about the mindset of a large and influential part of the British political class when it comes to Britain's role in the world and its position within the EU. The fact that such a call for the UK to leave the EU is possible is indicative of the semi-detached relationship which the UK is seen to have with the EU.

In countries such as France and Germany (along with the UK, the most populous member-states representing the three largest economies), such debates would simply not be possible in the way they are in the UK. Indeed, this point is accepted by even the most vehement critics of the EU and of Britain's continued membership of it. In the build-up to the French referendum on the Constitutional Treaty, Peter Hitchens – contemplating the possible fallout from a French 'no' vote – asks rhetorically whether the EU could really carry on without France (Hitchens, *Mail*, 15 May 2005). This, he concludes, would simply be unthinkable. Without France, the organisation would simply cease to be a European Union in any meaningful sense, such is France's centrality in the very idea of what Europe is. By contrast, it is very possible to imagine a European Union which didn't contain the UK.

Whilst it is true that political actors and commentators in France, for example, can and do advocate reform of the EU or even the disbanding it entirely in its current guise, it is impossible that they could advocate the secession of their country from the EU, whilst expecting the Union to continue to exist in anything resembling its current form. Were France (or Germany) to leave the EU, it would cease to be a European Union in anything other than name. There would be no Union left with which to forge bilateral relations in the way in which British commentators argue the UK should.

Moreover, advocates of secession from the EU are confined to the margins of political debate in both France and Germany. Mainstream opponents of the Constitutional Treaty, such as Phillipe de Villiers, remained in favour of the EU *per se* and France's continued membership of this Union, taking issue instead with the type of EU they saw enshrined in the Constitutional Treaty. Secession for the EU is a position advocated only by extremists such as Jean-Marie Le Penn and his *Front National*. In Germany, it is virtually impossible, for historical reasons, for any mainstream politician to advocate anything other than Germany being strongly rooted in the EU.

In the UK, debates about the country following the path of Norway or Switzerland are indicative of the fact that many people in the political class and the media (as well as in British society more generally) have never fully reconciled themselves with the fact that Britain is a European country. There remains a deep-seated separation between Britain and 'Europe,' which is reflected in the debates surrounding the EU.

In this section it was argued that the UK is positioned outside the EU in much of the coverage of the treaty reform process in the right-wing press. This semi-detachment is reflected also in the ongoing debates about the UK's continued membership of the EU. For the remainder of the current chapter I will analyse the way in which both the UK and the EU are reproduced as separate (and internally

unified) political entities through the action of the logic of equivalence. The following section examines the way in which this psychological detachment from the continent seems to be supported by the structure of the British and European economies.

5.2 The EU as a 'Foreign' Power

The EU is described on numerous occasions within the right-wing press as 'a foreign power' attempting to assume control over certain aspects of British life in which it has no business interfering. The use of this terminology, it will be argued here, reinforces the impression created that the UK, rather than being an important political actor within the EU, is external to the EU and engaged in bilateral relations *with* the EU. Moreover, it is an additional example of the underlying nationalism which characterises debates about the EU. The conceptual architecture and the vocabulary employed to debate the EU are modelled on the nation-state. Consequently, the EU is constructed as a foreign power in the most radical sense of the term. It is discussed as if it were a neighbouring state with which the UK is engaged in bilateral relationship.

A speech by Former Conservative Party Leader Iain Duncan Smith in July 2003 in which he was highly critical of the EU and the proposed EU Constitution received widespread coverage in the *Telegraph* and the *Mail* in the following days (see *Telegraph*, 11 July 2003; Brogan, *Telegraph*, 11 July 2003; Hughes, *Mail*, 11 July 2003; *Mail*, 11 July 2003; Littlejohn, *Sun*, 11 July 2003; Kavanagh, *Sun*, 11 July 2003). In this speech Mr Duncan Smith argued that 'Parliament has no more right to lay Britain's sovereignty at the feet of a *foreign constitution* than it has to ban elections' (Brogan, *Telegraph*, 11 July 2003, emphasis added). The 'Constitution' is a document foisted on the UK by a foreign power, namely the EU. According to this logic, the EU, whose policies and institutional make-up this constitution will govern, is not something of which the UK is part, but appears instead to be an entirely separate entity.

In similar vein, Toby Helm reminds us in the *Telegraph* that at the 2001 General Election Conservative Party Leader William Hague ‘toured the country decrying the creeping powers of Brussels and warning that Britain was becoming a “foreign land” to its own people’ (Helm, *Telegraph*, 4 May 2005). Although there are no references to the EU as either a foreign power or a foreign country in the *Sun*, William Hague argues in the *News of the World* that the purpose of the proposed Constitutional Treaty ‘is to subject people to *alien authority*, in the shape of a commission and court outside their own country and over which they have no control’ (Hague, *NOTW*, 20 June 2004, emphasis added).

The idea that the EU is a foreign entity is also evident in the *Mail*. Melanie Phillips, for example, argues that a common European approach to criminal justice is tantamount to handing over control of this area of policy to a foreign power. She argues that ‘[a] justice system imposed by a foreign power is so oppressive, unjust and undemocratic as to be unconscionable’ (Phillips, *Mail*, 12 May 2003). Elsewhere in the same article she comments that ‘foreign technocrats and bureaucrats - supported by politically driven judges - are to exercise draconian control from above and suppress the expression of national will.’ Phillips implies here that the nation-state is a natural form of political community and that a functioning legal system is impossible without this form of political community. Whilst nations share inherent bonds of solidarity and the acceptance of common standards and procedures for the administration of the law, no such solidarity exists beyond national boundaries. For this reason there can be no common European justice system of which Britain is a constituent part on an equal footing with other members.

The use of the term ‘foreign’ to describe the EU can be interpreted in two ways. On the one hand, it could be taken to imply that the treaty reform process (like EU more generally) is dominated by countries other than the UK, and that the terms of its membership of the Union are dictated to the UK by those more powerful member-states. On the other hand, it is possible to give a more radical interpretation of this terminology and argue that the depiction of the EU as ‘foreign’ presents the EU itself as a foreign country.

The first of these interpretations is a prominent aspect of the eurosceptic discourse, and is discussed in detail in Chapter 4. In the current chapter, however, it will be argued that the latter, more radical interpretation of foreignness also forms part of the eurosceptic discourses. The depiction of the EU as a ‘foreign power’ reinforces the role it plays in the construction of Britain and the reproduction of the eurosceptic discourse of British national identity. If the EU is itself a state, rather than a complex and multi-faceted system of supra-state institutions, it becomes far harder to imagine the UK as part of the EU, rather than existing alongside it.

Even though it is conceded by commentators within the right-wing press that the EU has important political and economic ties ‘with’ the EU, it cannot be assumed that the EU is necessarily a friendly neighbour. Indeed in many of the articles examined in the context of this study, it is seen as a hostile presence in the UK’s near abroad. In the following section I focus on the construction of the EU as a more immediate threat to the UK.

5.3 The EU as Colonial Power

The coverage of the EU in the right-wing press gives the impression that Britain is the victim of a plot orchestrated by the EU to gain control over it by any means possible. Driven forward by supranational institutions such as the Commission and the European Court of Justice (ECJ), the principal aim of the EU is to gain power over an ever greater range of policy competences. The fantasies of control and domination on which the eurosceptic discourse is grounded, lead commentators in the right-wing press to advocate the British government adopt an overwhelmingly defensive stance towards the EU, involving the use of opt-outs and vetoes to minimise the deepening of integration and the extent to which the UK will be subject to EC law.

5.3.1 EU Interventionism

The EU, it is argued, demonstrates a tendency to intervene in areas in which there is no need for government intervention. The activities are dismissed on some occasions as unnecessary ‘busybodying’ (*Mail*, 2 June 2004). ‘Brussels’ is guilty of ‘meaningless regulation’ and ‘bureaucratic meddling’ (*Mail*, 17 July 2003; see also Osborne, *Mail*, 30 May 2005; Chapman, *Mail*, 12 October 2007; Hoey, *Mail*, 21 October 2007; Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 20 June 2003; Cecil, *Sun*, 25 June 2003; Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 15 June 2007 for further references to EU’s tendency to meddle).

Elsewhere, the menace posed to the UK by the EU is described in even starker terms. The EU is presented as an exercise in imperial domination which the UK must resist at all costs. The *Mail* editorial on 20 October 2007 argues in extremely clear, direct terms that the EU has imperial designs and that the UK is set to become a willing colony of the EU with the complicity of its own government. It claims that the ‘PM has signed away a raft of new powers to a Brussels dominated, imperial Europe’ (*Mail*, 20 October 2007). Here we see the EU positioned not just as a foreign power, but a foreign power with imperial ambitions which could subsume and overwhelm the UK.

Simon Heffer, meanwhile, expresses concern about ‘the vast and expanding right of a foreign power to dictate to our country’ (Heffer, *Mail*, 13 May 2005). Given the desire of the EU to ‘dictate’ the internal affairs of the UK, the presence of this foreign power over the horizon is far from benign. The choice of this term is interesting as it evokes a controlling, totalitarian form of government associated with the regimes above against which Britain has fought in the past. Similarly, it constructs the EU as an imperial force which is looking to assert its domination over a foreign territory.

The impression given is of a piecemeal, yet coordinated, attempt by the EU to assume control of the UK one policy at a time. Nowhere is this clearer than in the final stages of the negotiations to agree the Lisbon Treaty. On 12 October 2007, a headline in the *Telegraph* tells us, for example, that the ‘EU wants control over

justice' (Helm, *Telegraph*, 12 October 2007). Later that month it is energy policy which Brussels has in its sights (Evans-Pritchard, *Telegraph*, 20 October 2007). In the same article it is claimed that Brussels' desire to gain control over energy policy is motivated, at least in part, by a desire to control the "strategic prize" of Britain's North Sea oil.' This, it is argued, would have serious ramifications for Britain's energy security and, consequently, its ability to act independently of the European Commission.

In the *Mail*, it is argued the EU is determined 'to seize further powers in future' and would be facilitated in achieving its goal by the inclusion of a so-called escalator clause in the Constitutional Treaty, which would allow subsequent transfers of power to the EU without the need for any further treaty revisions (*Mail*, 17 June 2003). Elsewhere, there are further references to the apparent desire of the EU to expand and develop an ever wider range of policy competences. Jonathan Oliver, for example, comments on the EU's 'ambitions to develop its own foreign and security policy' (Oliver, J, *Mail*, 24 June 2007). Similar concerns about the desire of the EU to assume control of even more areas of policy is evident within the *Sun*. The title of Nic Cecil's article on 5 June 2003 claims that the EU aims 'to seize control of UK taxes' (Cecil, *Sun*, 5 June 2003). In the main body of the article, the claim is repeated that Brussels will be allowed to 'seize more control of our economy.'

The process of imperial conquest, it is argued, is being driven forward by the European Constitution. The *Telegraph* argues, for example, that the Constitutional Treaty 'nurtures imperial pretensions' (*Telegraph*, 30 October 2004). Former French President Giscard d'Estaing, the architect of and driving force behind the Constitutional Treaty, is also described in similarly imperial terms. Simon Heffer, for example, refers to him bluntly as 'Emperor Giscard d'Estaing' in one article (Heffer, *Mail*, 14 June 2003). A similar comment about Giscard's emperor-like tendencies is made by Heffer the following month. In reference to the proposed European anthem to be included in the Constitutional Treaty, he quips that '[t]he anthem should be the big tune from Beethoven's Emperor Concerto, so Giscard can have something to

identify with (Heffer, *Mail* on 12 July 2003). In the *Telegraph*, meanwhile, Giscard is referred to as a 'Euro-imperialist' (Evans-Pritchard, *Telegraph*, 19 June 2007).

5.3.2 The ECJ: The Motor of Integration

The means by which this invasion by stealth will take place is through the expansionist interpretation of the treaties by the ECJ. The importance of judges' interpretations in the ECJ in driving forward the process of European integration was hinted at in Melanie Phillips article quoted above (Phillips, *Mail*, 12 May 2003). Elsewhere, Melanie Phillips refers to the 'ever-expanding rulings of the European Court of Justice' which will lead, she argues, to 'the obliteration of Westminster's powers over large swathes of British public life' (Phillips, *Mail*, 14 June 2004). The *Mail* editorial argues in a similar vein that 'the European Court of Justice will always rule in the most federalist way possible in every dispute' (*Mail*, 19 June 2004).

In the *Telegraph* too, the judges within the ECJ are presented as power-hungry federalists, keen to gain ever greater control and influence over the process of European integration. Charles Moore argues that '[s]ince the European Court is staffed only by judges who believe in ever-closer European integration, it will make its decisions in that light' (Moore, *Telegraph*, 30 October 2004). Ambrose Evans-Pritchard, meanwhile, describes the ECJ as 'the unseen engine of EU federalism' (Evans-Pritchard, *Telegraph*, 19 June 2007).

The fear according to Evans-Pritchard is that the ECJ could become an "Imperial Court" along the lines of the Warren Supreme Court in the US from the 1950s to the 1970s' which potentially 'could push through a raft of far-reaching changes' (Evans-Pritchard, *Telegraph*, 20 October 2007). Later in the same article Evans Pritchard refers to the ECJ as a 'EU-wide supreme court,' which echoes the *Mail*, which dubbed the ECJ a 'supreme court' some four years earlier (*Mail*, 11 July 2003). In addition, there seems to be little that can be done to rein in the ECJ if it attempts to move beyond the specific competences set out for it in the EU treaties. As the *Telegraph* comments (Evans-Pritchard, *Telegraph*, 17 June 2004):

The court cannot engage in judicial activism, exploiting the charter to invent new social and economic rights for Britain. Or so the Government hopes. The snag is that there is no tribunal above the European Court, should it abuse its power.

In the *Sun* there is also concern about the expansionist interpretation of the new treaties on the part of the ECJ. George Pascoe-Watson, for example, argues that the Constitutional Treaty hands the ECJ 'the right to make British law' (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 20 June 2003). Similarly, a *Sun* editorial the following year argues that in the Constitutional Treaty '[t]here are many, many areas in which there is either no policy or only a vague ideal' (*Sun*, 19 June 2004). Consequently, the article continues, 'Brussels will have the right to fill those vacuums and the European Court will be able to impose its will on our courts and our Parliament,' a point which is supported by Simon Wolfson in the *Telegraph* (Wolfson, *Telegraph*, 29 October 2004). For Trevor Kavanagh, the fear is that British law will be made not by an elected parliament but by an activist ECJ. The CFR, he argues, 'will give unelected judges of the European Court of Justice power to overrule decisions by elected MPs at Westminster' (Kavanagh, *Sun*, 26 October 2004).

There are repeated references within the right-wing press to the proposed the expansion of the competence of the ECJ into new areas of policy as a result of both the Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty. Here there is an interesting divide which opens up between the three newspapers analysed in the present chapter. Whilst all three demonstrate indignation about the apparently expanding competences of the ECJ, the focus of their ire is in each case different.

Coverage in the *Mail* focuses on the new policy areas over which the ECJ will gain jurisdiction. As a result of the Lisbon Treaty, '[o]ur criminal law will be more subservient to the European Court of Justice' (*Mail*, 11 June 2007 a). In addition, the ECJ, we learn, 'will get enhanced powers to tell us how to run our justice system and determine our immigration policy' (Phillips, *Mail*, 25 June 2007). There is also concern evident about the effects of the Charter of Fundamental Rights (CFR), included in both the Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty, and the potential

power it grants the ECJ to define policy in a number of new areas. 'The charter,' we are told, 'creates rights to asylum, social security, housing assistance and health care, all as the European Court chooses to define' (Eastham, *Mail*, 19 June 2004).

Similarly, Jonathan Oliver reports the following day CBI Director-General Digby Jones's warning that the Constitutional Treaty 'threatened British jobs and could unleash a wave of damaging European court rulings' (Oliver, J, *Mail*, 20 June 2004).

The fear that the ECJ will gain jurisdiction in new areas of policy is shared by the *Telegraph*. Concern is evident about the ability of the ECJ to intervene in the area of criminal justice (Hennessy and Kite, *Telegraph*, 10 June 2007), as well as cultural, social and moral issues. Ambrose Evans-Pritchard and George Jones argue for example, that the Constitutional Treaty 'extends the European Court's jurisdiction to almost all areas of Union activity for the first time, giving Euro-judges the last say over economic, social, and moral policy through the Charter of fundamental Rights' (Evans-Pritchard and Jones, *Telegraph*, 31 October 2004; see also Moore, *Telegraph*, 30 October 2004).

However, the *Telegraph's* overriding concern is that the ECJ will gain greater powers in the realm of economic policy, curtailing the UK's ability to pursue the liberal policies which are seen as the source of its relative economic success. In the article cited above, Evans-Pritchard claims that Britain's economic freedoms are being signed away 'to a bunch of Euro judges' (Evans-Pritchard, *Telegraph*, 20 October 2007). On another occasion, Evans-Pritchard argues in a similar vein the inclusion of the Charter of Fundamental Rights (CFR) in the proposed European reform treaty could spell disaster of the UK economy. 'It empowers Euro-judges to chip away at Britain's economic model, imposing Rheinland (sic) corporatism by the back door,' he argues (Evans-Pritchard, *Telegraph*, 19 June 2007). Consequently, '[w]e might as well turn the lights off in the City if the ECJ ever gets its claws into that.'

Writing some three years before Evans-Pritchard, George Cox takes aim at the plan to include the Charter of Fundamental Rights in the original Constitutional

Treaty, arguing that the potentially negative effects of this legislation are hard to predict. However, Cox speculates, 'if the European Court's activist approach to tax law is anything to go by then we can expect today's reasonable-sounding "rights" to turn into tomorrow's intolerable burdens on business' (Cox, *Telegraph*, 3 June 2004). Such measures, we learn elsewhere, 'could give the European Court of Justice sweeping powers to overturn British law and roll back many of the free-market reforms of the past 20 years' (*Telegraph*, 15 June 2004 a). George Jones quotes then Conservative Party Leader Michael Howard's argument that the Constitutional Treaty 'would give EU judges "a blank sheet of paper on which to start re-writing UK employment and trade union legislation"' (Jones, *Telegraph*, 30 October 2004). Elsewhere, the *Telegraph* articulates its fear of 'European judges reinstating the union power curbed by Margaret Thatcher in the 1980,' a source of great anxiety for those who lived through the disruption and economic stagnation of the 1970's, for which over powerful trade-unions are seen to be to blame (*Telegraph*, 22 June 2007; see also Evans-Pritchard, *Telegraph*, 20 October 2007).

In the *Sun*, the principal concern seems to be the supremacy of ECJ rulings over those of national courts, which reflects the supremacy of EC law over national law. George Pascoe-Watson signals the potential consequences for the British criminal justice system of the expansion of EU competences into this area (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 20 June 2003):

British criminal courts will become subordinate to the European Court of Justice. This could undermine Britain's ancient system of common law justice, trial by jury and "habeas corpus" which limits the time a suspect can be detained without trial.

An editorial in the *Sun* from 2004, argues that a situation in which British courts are subordinate to the ECJ is an unacceptable affront to national self-determination and must be avoided, stating that '[w]e must enshrine for ever the supremacy of our Parliament and our courts. Laws must not be dictated by faceless European judges' (*Sun*, 16 June 2004).

The impression is given on occasions that the supremacy of EC law over national law is something that will be brought about by the Constitutional Treaty and thus represents a significant shift in the balance of power between the national and supra-national levels of governance. Trevor Kavanagh, for example, writes that the EU ‘will be transformed from a confederation of consenting states into a binding legal entity’ as a result of the treaty (Kavanagh, *Sun*, 20 June 2003). He continues, arguing that British law courts ‘will be subordinate to the European Court of Justice.’ The use of the present tense implies that this future state of affairs differs from the status quo, when in fact the long established principle of the supremacy of EC law actually predates British accession to the then EEC. This interpretation would appear to be supported by Kavanagh comments on the issue elsewhere. He comments for, example, the Prime Minister Tony Blair ‘backed a treaty giving Brussels “primacy” over laws governing vast areas of national life’ (Kavanagh, *Sun*, 19 June 2004).

5.3.3 *The Commission*

In addition to the ECJ the integrationist agenda is seen to be driven forward by the European Commission. According to much of what is written in the right-wing press, the Commission is as hell-bent on dismantling Britain’s opt-out as Europe’s judges. However, the Commission receives less attention in this context than the ECJ and the potential it possesses to move the process of integration forward through its judgements.

Labour MP Frank Field is quoted in the *Telegraph* on 17 June 2007 arguing that the Commission is bent on finding ways to drive the European integration project forward regardless of the desire of national governments to avoid this. Field comments that ‘[e]ver since we joined the EU (sic), British governments have drawn up their red-lines and the Commission has always found ways to move around them rather than crossing them’ (Wilson and Waterfield, *Telegraph*, 17 June 2007). Thus, whilst the Commission is duty-bound to accept the letter of the law, it fails to respect the spirit of the opt-outs secured by the British government and persistently seeks to find ways of circumnavigating them and forcing the British government to abide by common policies from which it has sought gain opt-outs.

Again, the impression is created of malevolent force acting against the interest of the British in order to force them to adhere to common policies which are essential for achieving the goal of political union. This concern about the intentions of the Commission is further underlined by comments attributed to Michael Connarty, the Chairman of the House of Commons European Scrutiny Committee. Connarty expresses his anxiety that the opt outs secured by the British government will be insufficient 'to repel the spread of EU Commission interference and control over policy areas vital to the UK's independent interests' (Carlin, *Telegraph*, 1 October 2007). Regulation by the Commission is seen as unwanted and harmful and a form of intrusion which must be resisted at all costs.

Similar concerns are evident also in the *Mail*. During the negotiation of the Constitutional Treaty, we are told that the Commission is keen to deepen integration in many areas, reducing the control of member-states at the expense of EU institutions: 'Romano Prodi, head of the EU Commission, yesterday demanded an end to Britain's veto over key policies such as taxation' (*Mail*, 19 June 2003). On 9 May 2006, we are also told by the *Mail* that 'Brussels was accused last night of trying to "sneak in" parts of the rejected EU constitution by the back door' (*Mail*, 9 May 2006). In the same article, Conservative MEP Syed Kamall is quoted saying that the commission was 'intent on forcing through the aspects that incited widespread opposition to the document in the first place.'

The *Sun*, also reports Commission President Romano Prodi's call for a reduction in decision making by unanimity and an expanded use of Qualified Majority Voting (QMV), under which it is possible for the British government to be outvoted by a coalition of other member-states.⁹ However, Nic Cecil argues that Prodi and other leading 'eurocrats' want '[a]ll vetoes scrapped' (Cecil, *Sun*, 5 June 2003). Similarly, Cecil reports on the 'European Commission bid to seize new

⁹ In practise, it is very difficult for a large member-state to be outvoted because of the weighting of votes under QMV to reflect population size, and the modus operandi of the Council under which consensus is sought even on issues where decisions can be taken under QMV (see Nugent, 2006).

powers by the back door,' something, he argues, that poses a 'threat to Britain's defense, tax and social security systems' (Cecil, *Sun*, 17 July 2003).

On many occasions, the *Sun* refers to the aims and objectives of what it terms 'EU chiefs.' It is hard to define precisely to whom this term is meant to apply. On one occasion the term 'EU finance chiefs' is used to refer to national finance ministers (*Sun*, 6 June 2005). Elsewhere, reference is made to 'European Commission chiefs' (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 18 October 2007). The term 'EU chiefs' appears to be a vague catch-all term for those involved in high level policy decisions, which effect both the pace and direction of integration. As with the ECJ and the Commission, the impression is given that the EU chiefs want to advance the process of European integration. George Pascoe-Watson, for example, reports that 'EU chiefs want to seize control of Britain's tax and spending powers-whether or not we keep the Pound' (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 11 June 2003). Some four years later, as the negotiations over the Lisbon treaty are reaching their conclusion, Pascoe-Watson informs us in the title of his article that the 'EU chiefs plot 51 grabs for power' (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 19 June 2007).

5.3.4 The British Opt-Outs

Since the EU is seen as a malevolent force against which the UK must protect itself, any further integration (or even positive engagement with the EU) is treated within the right-wing press as a form of betrayal or sell-out on the part of Britain's political leaders. For this reason, great emphasis is placed on the ability of the British government to resist any further deepening integration process.

The British government sought to pacify the concerns of the public about the effects of the 'Constitution' and the supposed increases in power of the EU institutions by obtaining a series of opt-outs from the most contentious areas of policy such as foreign and security policy, justice and home affairs and the CFR. However, the right-wing press attempts to cast doubt on the force and the durability of these opt-outs. The claim is made repeatedly within the right-wing press that these will eventually be undermined by the expansionist interpretations of the treaties by

the ECJ, which is keen to assert its own authority and the primacy of EU law across the entire EU regardless of the apparent willingness of national governments and national citizens to avoid such an outcome.

Roger Bootle, for example, warns us about the fragility of the opt-outs secured by the British government in the Treaty of Lisbon. 'That protection,' he argues, 'may well not survive the first onslaught of the European courts' (Bootle, *Telegraph*, 22 October 2007). The implication here is that there is a sustained and deliberate attempt by judges to undermine the UK opt-out and in so doing drive forward the process of integration and homogenisation of policy at the EU level.

Concerns about the flimsiness of the British opt-out are of even greater concern to commentators in the *Mail*, and it is a theme which recurs throughout its coverage of the treaty reform process. Edward Heathcoat Amory, for example, makes a similar argument claiming that Britain's opt-outs from certain measures in the Constitutional Treaty will easily be undermined by the interpretations of the ECJ (Heathcoat Amory, E, *Mail*, 18 June 2004):

ministers claim that they have won an assurance the Charter of Fundamental Rights will not have the force of law. But it will be the federalist European Court which makes the final decision on whether it has legal force.

Some three years later, he makes an identical claim with regard to the opt-outs secured from the Treaty of Lisbon, arguing that '[m]ost leading lawyers, the Commons committee, and the European Court itself, have indicated that the British protocol is not worth the paper its printed on' (Heathcoat Amory, E, *Mail*, 17 October 2007).

Similarly, Ian Drury reports the concerns about the British opt-outs articulated by the European scrutiny committee. We are told that 'committee chairman Michael Connarty said the treaty would give the European Court of Justice more power to ignore Britain's opt-outs' (Drury, *Mail*, 10 October 2007). Three days later we are reminded again about the fragility of the opt-outs, with the *Mail* claiming that '[b]it by bit, the European Court would sweep them away' (*Mail*, 13 October

2007). Benedict Brogan refers also to the judgment of Michael Connarty, on the status of the British opt-out. The desire of the ECJ is, according to Connarty, 'to apply EU law across the board' consequently, it 'will not accept a permanent exemption for the UK' regardless of the opt-out obtained by the UK (Brogan, *Mail*, 15 October 2007).

Worryingly, there seems also to be a clear precedent for this judicial activism on the part of the ECJ. According to Anthony Browne, the court has in the past also disregarded apparent opt-outs obtained from by the UK from certain common measures at the EU level (Browne, *Mail*, 15 October 2007):

Do you remember the fundamental principle that the EU should have no right to impose criminal laws on the UK against the wishes of our Parliament? This was swept aside in a judgment by the European Court of Justice (one of the main motors for integration) which ruled, against the British government, the British parliament and the British people, that our European partners had the right to require Britain to introduce a criminal law even if not a single person in Britain wanted it.

The *Sun* is equally sceptical about the ability of the UK to maintain its opt-outs in the face of subsequent rulings by the ECJ. Graeme Wilson, for example, argues that, as a result of the Treaty of Lisbon, 'the European Court of Justice will have more power to ignore opt-outs won by Britain' (Wilson, *Sun*, 9 October 2007). Moreover, the *Sun* editorial ten days later reports that a committee of MP's that the so-called red-line positions defended by the British government in negotiations over the Treaty of Lisbon will eventually be circumnavigated by the ECJ. We read that '[t]hose lines, the MPs say, are drawn "on sand." They will be washed away by Brussels and the European court' (*Sun*, 19 October 2007).

5.3.5 *The Protection of the Veto*

In addition to the focus on the British opt-outs from the Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty, there is enormous emphasis placed by the right-wing press on the maintenance of the UK's veto, and on the desirability of unanimity-based decision making within the Council of Ministers. QMV is viewed as a potential

threat to the British national interest and something which must be avoided, or at the very least curtailed wherever possible. There is no consideration of the fact that QMV may allow the UK to pass measures that are in its interest and which may otherwise be blocked by other member-states which oppose them. The deepening of European integration is not represented as something which can bring benefits to the UK, but as threat from which the UK must be defended. The maintenance of the veto is seen as the best way to stymie further legislation and, consequently, is seen as synonymous with Britain's interests.

The coverage in all three newspapers analysed in this chapter abounds with reference to the national veto and the number of vetoes which the UK will lose through the various treaty reforms proposed. The 'loss' (see Kirkup and Waterfield, *Telegraph*, 24 October 2007; Heathcoat Amory, E, *Mail*, 17 June 2004; *Mail*, 13 October 2007; Kirby, *NOTW*, 12 June 2005) or 'surrender' of the veto as it is often described (see for example Evans-Pritchard and Jones, *Telegraph*, 26 October 2004; Jones *Telegraph*, 22 June 2007; *Mail*, 16 June 2007; Cecil, *Sun*, 14 June 2003) is equated with a loss of UK power and an undermining of the British national interest.

The focus is on Britain's ability to block measures and almost no emphasis is placed on the UK's ability to pass measures that are in its interest. Referring to plans to end decision making by unanimity in certain aspects of Justice and Home Affairs policy, Phillip Johnstone highlights that '[i]f the veto goes, Britain could be outvoted on a range of criminal law matters, including hot pursuit powers for cross-border police activities, courts procedures and data sharing' (Johnstone, *Telegraph*, 6 June 2007).

In the *Mail*, the veto is referred to as 'Britain's veto on attacks on its sovereignty' (*Mail*, 22 June 2003). Elsewhere we are told that having a veto enables us to block legislation which is not in our interests. Edward Heathcoat Amory expresses a similar point (Heathcoat Amory, E, *Mail*, 12 June 2003):

Under the constitution, Eurocrats could dictate to British companies how to employ workers, how to treat them and when they can sack them. In all these

areas Britain would have no veto and could not prevent-European countries imposing the same high-cost regime on UK businesses.

Similarly, Andrew Green, writing in the *Mail* on 26 October 2004, openly mocks the idea that compromise and concession are the way for Britain to gain influence and pursue its interests within the EU (Green, *Mail* on 26 October 2004). He claims that then Home Secretary David Blunkett:

had reached new levels of absurdity, claiming – presumably with a straight face – that giving up our veto on immigration and asylum policy was the way to influence our European partners.

In the *Sun*, Nic Cecil argues in a similar vein that ‘the axing of our power to veto new EU tax laws’ will allow ‘Brussels to seize more control of our economy (Cecil, *Sun*, 5 June 2003). George Pascoe-Watson agrees that ending the veto in certain policy areas will ‘hand Brussels the power to dictate UK law’ (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 20 June 2003). ‘Shocking cost of surrendering just ONE veto,’ as a result of which ‘Britain will be forced to surrender its oil stocks to the EU under the new treaty - costing taxpayers £ 6 Billion’ (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 18 October 2007). Deprived of the veto, Britain will have measures forced upon it which run counter to its national interest.

It is, therefore, an overwhelmingly negative and defensive mindset which provides the framework through which EU level politics is evaluated. The public are told by the right-wing press that the EU is something to be feared and approached with trepidation. It is something from which the public must be protected by the national government and the power of the veto, rather than a political entity which can produce positive policy outcomes that will benefit citizens’ lives.

The defensive position adopted towards EU level politics by the right-wing press is summarised well by an article which appeared in the *Mail* on May 17 2005. It reported a speech by then Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown on the subject of the European Union and the European Constitution (*Mail*, 17 May 2005). The article in question revealed that Brown believed a referendum in the UK on the aforementioned ‘Constitution’ was potentially winnable and that a strong case could

be made for a yes vote. Crucially, however, he felt this would only be possible if the argument in favour of the Constitution were to be made ‘from a position that was robustly critical of the EU.’

Thus, even in one of those rare moments in which a senior British politician is speaking in favour of Britain’s positive engagement with the EU, it is tempered by a highly negative account of the EU itself. No positive argument is made for Britain’s membership of the EU, highlighting the benefits Britain receives from this. It is little wonder the British people have showed so little enthusiasm for the EU when the organisation is presented in such negative terms: as a threat which must be guarded against and a flawed institution in need of reform.

5.3.6 Fantasmatic Support Structures

The argument presented above, that the EU is constructed as a malevolent, quasi-imperial force which is plotting a piecemeal take over of Britain, is a perfect example of the fantasmatic component of the eurosceptic discourses of British national identity. The function of fantasy, according to Lacan, is linked to the desire for an absent communitarian fullness capable of providing the subject with a stable and fully-constituted identity. Moreover, as was argued in Chapter 2, the idea of political community is synonymous in modern political discourse with the national community (see Billig, 1995). Nationalist discourses, however, rely on the simultaneous construction of national enemies, which function as a barrier to the achievement of the ‘national mission’ (Žižek, 1993; see also Torfing, 1999; Billig, 1995).

The articles analysed above present the EU as an aggressive force which is attempting to undermine the freedom and independence of the British nation-state and as such it functions as a barrier to the maintenance of a sovereign and independent British state. In this sense the EU functions as the enemy of the British nation within the eurosceptic discourses. Consequently, the EU functions as a barrier to the achievement of a stable social order and the fully-constituted subjective identity associated with the primal *jouissance* of the Real.

When presented in this way, it is possible to comprehend the power of eurosceptic discourses and the hold they are able to maintain over citizens. The apparent possibility of a stable and fully-reconciled social order seems to hang just beyond the horizon, but we are kept from this by the malevolent forces of the hostile foreign power.

5.4 The EU as Emerging Superstate

According to the right-wing press, the process of European integration is based around a ‘secret agenda’ to construct a *European superstate* which will usurp the constituent member-states that currently make up the EU. The implication is that the European integration project has a pre-determined *telos* decided upon by the political elites in both member-states and the EU institutions which govern the EU. This plan must, however, be hidden by these elites from the citizens they govern for fear of evoking a revolt against their plan.

The different aspects of the putative superstate will be assembled step by step, under the very noses of the citizenry but in such a way that they fail to notice the expanding competence of the EU until it is too late, and the superstate is already in place. This construction of the EU as a state in the making draws on the construction of the EU as a foreign, colonial power examined in the previous chapter and is again indicative of the extent to which the EU is viewed through the prism of the nation-state. Commentators lack the conceptual vocabulary to define and account for the EU, whose powers and governance structures extend beyond those of an international organisation but fall short of those of a state. Consequently, once the powers of the EU surpass those of an international organisation, commentators are left with little alternative than to depict the Union itself as a state under construction.

In the *Telegraph* there is an abundance of references to a ‘federal superstate’ (Sayers, *Telegraph*, 31 May 2005) and to an ‘interventionist superstate’ (*Telegraph*, 24 June 2005). Adam Nicolson argues that ‘[t]he entire logic of the modern

European idea is that it leads to a single European state' (Nicolson, *Telegraph*, 10 June 2003). Here it is clearly implied that the underlying motivation behind the European integration project has been obscured from the public at large and is only now being revealed by those in the media with special insights into the dynamics of the whole European project.

Elsewhere, the *Telegraph* reports concerns about the possibility of a European superstate articulated by political leaders. Foreign Secretary Margaret Becket is quoted saying that what was needed was a Europe 'of sovereign nations, not a superstate' (Clout, *Telegraph*, 22 June 2007). Similarly, then Shadow Home Secretary Oliver Letwin comments that 'those intent in Brussels on creating a European superstate have expected that people in Britain will not notice the implications of treaty clauses that create the basis for the EU to gradually expand its powers (Brogan, *Telegraph*, 11 June 2003). Here we see a similar argument to that proposed by Nicholson above. The fundamental intention of the EU integration project is the formation of a single trans-European state. On this occasion, however, a direct link is created between the goals and the Brussels based elite who are the driving force behind the project.

In the *Mail* too, constant reference is made to the European superstate which it is claimed is under construction behind the backs of the British people. In May 2003, the *Mail* published a piece by Simon Heffer in which he offers an Orwellian vision of what life will be like as a citizen in the soon to be created United States of Europe (Heffer, *Mail*, 14 May 2003). Heffer describes in apocalyptic terms the ills which could befall Britain if it ceased to be an independent nation-state and was reduced instead to a mere region of an overbearing and interventionist European superstate.

Four days later an article by Michael Woodhead profiled Gisele Stuart the German-born British MP who, as one of the UK's delegates to the Convention on the Future of Europe 'represents Tony Blair at the top table where a new Euro superstate is being molded' (Woodhead, *Mail*, 18 May 2003). It is evident that the European

superstate so feared by Heffer is becoming reality through the proposed European Constitution being negotiated, and that it is being shaped by those at the 'top table' of international politics. The idea that the march towards a European superstate is a goal of the political elite which enjoys little (if any) popular support is a theme which will be examined in further detail below.

Writing over four years later and with reference to the Lisbon Treaty negotiated to replace the abortive Constitutional Treaty, Melanie Phillips' rhetoric is virtually identical to that of Heffer and Woodhead. Phillips argues that the treaty 'brings into being a totally new global entity, a superstate which changes the legal relationship between Britain and the EU into one to which the British people have never agreed' (Phillips, *Mail*, 25 June 2007).

References to the nascent European superstate are no less frequent in the *Sun*. Here too the EU is described as a superstate in the making and the proposed Constitution is seen to be the next step along the path to realising the goal of creating a single European state. Jim Sillars argues, for example, that the real issue at the heart of debates about the 'Constitution,' and Britain's relationship with the EU more generally, turns on 'whether we want more control from Brussels, and whether we want to sink British sovereignty in a new embryonic federal state of Europe' (Sillars, *Sun*, 3 June 2003).

Again the available incidences of this rhetoric in the *Sun* are too numerous to reproduce in their entirety. However, the following examples are indicative of the way in which the European integration project is constructed within this newspaper. Trevor Kavanagh refers to the Constitutional Treaty as 'a blueprint for the federal superstate' (Kavanagh, *Sun*, 15 June 2004), a claim repeated by George Pascoe-Watson later that month (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 22 June 2004). On the 28 May 2005, the *Sun* editorial explains how 'the blueprint for a European superstate will be in shreds' following a possible 'no' vote in the forthcoming French referendum' (*Sun*, 28 May 2005) and in the lead up to the final agreement on the text of the Lisbon

Treaty in June 2007 we are told we ‘have just seven days before EU leaders sign up to a draconian new superstate’ (*Sun*, 15 June 2007).

The implication of the latter quotation is that any form of superstate would be one that exercised a high level of control over its citizens and would curtail the freedoms that they currently enjoy as members of their own nation-states. The European superstate then is not only something that should be resisted on the grounds that it is an elite-led project, which is being sold to citizens under false pretences. It is also a malevolent force which will exercise an unnecessary and unacceptable level of control over the lives of citizens.

5.4.1 *The EU and the USA*

The idea that the EU is a trans-continental state under construction is also evident from the parallels which are drawn between the EU and the USA. The term ‘United states of Europe’ is often used to describe the future status of the EU if it continues along the path of deeper integration (see Heffer, *Mail*, 14 May 2003). Andrew Alexander claims ‘France and Germany are determined that the new constitution will be the basis for a United States of Europe’ (Alexander, *Mail*, 23 May 2003). Similarly, William Rees-Mogg argues that the abortive Constitutional Treaty ‘showed how far Europe had already gone in the direction of a United States of Europe’ (Rees-Mogg, *Mail*, 19 June 2005).

These views are echoed in the *Telegraph* by Ruth Lea who argues that ‘[i]f the reform treaty is ratified and enforced, the EU's institutions will have all the powers they need to create a United States of Europe’ (Lea, *Telegraph*, 16 October 2007). Four days later the point is repeated by David Trimble again writing in the *Telegraph* (Trimble, *Telegraph*, 20 October 2007). In the *Sun* there are also frequent references to the EU as an emerging United State of Europe (see Wooding, *Sun*, 7 June 2003; Sillars, *Sun*, 17 June 2003; Littlejohn, *Sun*, 11 July 2003; *Sun*, 30 May 2005; Lea, *Sun*, 17 June 2006; Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 19 June 2007).

The parallels with the USA do not reflect favorably on the EU and its attempts to formalise its constitutional arrangements. William Rees-Mogg makes a similar point when drawing an unfavourable parallel between the proposed EU ‘Constitution’ and that of the USA (Rees-Mogg, *Mail*, 31 October 2004). Whereas ‘America’s constitution is liberal and democratic,’ he tells us, ‘the European is corporatist and undemocratic.’ Similarly, Mark Steyn comments that whilst the US constitution is founded on democratic principles and the sovereignty of the people, the EU’s proposed Constitutional Treaty is elitist and anti-democratic. For Steyn the difference between the EU and the USA is symbolised by the opening lines of the Constitutional Treaty and the US constitution: ‘The American constitution begins with the words “We the people.” The starting point for the EU constitution is: “We know better than the people” (Steyn, *Telegraph*, 31 May 2005).

5.4.2 The Momentum of European Integration

According to commentators in the right-wing press, not only is the final destination for the European integration project clear for all to see, but the progress towards this destination is also seen to be inevitable. As Anthony Browne argues, the EU was ‘[c]reated to tie Europe together after World War II’ (*Mail*, October 15 2007). For this reason, Browne continues, it ‘was designed to have an inner momentum for never ending integration that is all but unstoppable’. The metaphor most frequently employed to describe the inevitable and unstoppable advancement of the EU towards the formation of a European superstate is of the EU as ‘juggernaut’ whose momentum it is impossible to impede.

In the *Telegraph*, Toby Helm argues that ‘Britain will again be applying the brakes to the European juggernaut (Helm, *Telegraph*, 30 May 2005). Similarly, the *Telegraph* argues two years later that, despite the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty in the French and Dutch referenda, ‘the reality is that the EU juggernaut has ploughed onwards in exactly the way that the Eurocrats planned’ (*Telegraph*, 24 June 2007 a). In October 2007, following the final agreement on the text of the Lisbon Treaty, Bruno Waterfield and Toby Helm report that ‘Gordon Brown has promised

British voters that he will halt the European Union juggernaut now the issue of the new Treaty is settled' (Waterfield and Helm, *Telegraph*, 20 October 2007).

The *Mail* makes similar use of the juggernaut metaphor in its coverage of the EU treaty reform process. In reference to the ongoing debate over whether the UK ought to hold a referendum on the proposed Constitutional Treaty it comments that (*Mail*, 20 June 2004):

An emphatic national rejection of this document would draw a red line that could not easily be erased and would be for once a real victory over the Brussels juggernaut.

In the aftermath of the French and Dutch referenda, meanwhile we are told 'the Brussels juggernaut' is set to refire its engines in an attempt to salvage the Constitutional Treaty (*Mail*, 8 June 2005 a). In a similar vein, the *Mail* asks rhetorically if bitter experience doesn't teach us 'that the EU juggernaut, with Germany at the wheel, is all but unstoppable?' (*Mail*, 21 June 2007). By October 2007 the fears of a reawakening of the European integration process appear to be well founded. 'The Brussels juggernaut' we are told 'moves on' (Rees-Mogg, *Mail*, 14 October 2007).

Interestingly, whilst the metaphor of the juggernaut is used frequently within both the *Mail* and the *Telegraph*, it is absent from the coverage of the EU in the *Sun*. Nevertheless, it is undoubtedly a prominent feature of the eurosceptic discourse on and one which symbolises the apparently unstoppable momentum of the EU towards transcontinental statehood.

5.4.3 *Fantasmatic Support Structures*

The process of European integration is characterised as an elite-led project which is progressing with an irresistible momentum towards the pre-determined endpoint of a European super-state. This process is facilitated by a deliberate campaign of misinformation and subterfuge by the elites to blind the citizens they are supposed to represent from the true nature of the European project.

Once again, the EU is presented as a plot or a conspiracy against the UK which aims to undermine its existence as an independent nation-state. In this case it is argued that the EU would subsume the UK and turn it into a mere province of a trans-European state, under centralised control from Brussels. This image of control, domination and subterfuge reinforces the fantasmatic support structures on which the eurosceptic discourse of British national identity depends for its continued strength.

Given the open-ended nature of the EU, and the fact that as a supra-national entity it seems to run counter from the most deeply sedimented assumptions about the correct nature or socio-political organisation, it is extremely difficult for commentators or citizens to comprehend its nature as a political entity, or to identify with certainty the ultimate destination of the European integration project. As was argued in Section 5.1, the EU is constructed as a single, unitary actor within the eurosceptic discourse to which a clear set of aims and motivations can be imputed. Thus, in the absence of a clear understanding of what the EU is and where it is heading, the aims and objectives of the EU become an object of fantasy (see Žižek, 1989, 1993).

In an attempt to understand the EU, we attribute to it a hidden agenda which runs counter to the interests of the UK, and whose ultimate aim is to control and subjugate the latter. This we could argue is the ‘horrific’ dimension of the eurosceptic fantasy (Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 147). However, there is also a ‘beatific’ dimension to these narratives since it is argued that if Britain were to be able to escape the confines of the EU, it would be free to pursue its national interest unhindered. In this sense, the eurosceptic discourse holds out the possibility of the nation achieving its destiny as a fully-constituted social order able to provide the stable identities the subject seeks.

5.5 Europe as Cultural ‘Other’

Within the right-wing press, the significance of the EU treaty reform process is not limited to the political sphere, but is felt also in the broader cultural sphere. For

example, Melanie Phillips (*Mail*, 12 May 2003) argues that, as a result of the Charter of Fundamental Rights (CFR), which formed part of the Constitutional Treaty:

We will lose our freedom to make moral choices. We will be bound by the EU's Charter of Fundamental Rights, a means of enforcing politically correct doctrines and other values endorsed by the European nomenklatura.

Phillips' concern that the CFR represents the transformation of the EU from a principally economic organisation to one with a far broader remit is echoed by Charles Moore (Moore, *Telegraph*, 30 October 2004), who comments that as a result of the CFR:

Everyone has a right to a "high level" of this and that – healthcare, environmental protection, ciabatta, whatever. It will give the European Court a much wider basis for making decisions. Until recently, most European decisions have been economic. Now they will be cultural. This is about what sort of lives we should lead, and it gives legal authority to European judges and bureaucrats to tell us how to lead them.

For both Moore and Phillips the idea that the EU should have a role in cultural matters – the way we manage 'our lives' – is anathema. Whilst they oppose the deepening of economic integration, there appears to be a qualitative distinction between their opposition to the EU's role in the economy, and their opposition to any form of supranational competence in more broadly social issues. This is perhaps indicative of the more obvious association of the latter with what Žižek (1993: 201) terms the 'national Thing': the unique set of cultural practices which constitute the essence of nationhood.

The reference by Moore to 'ciabatta' would also seem to imply a suspicion of curious 'other' form of 'enjoyment' manifested in the image of the food they eat. The way in which the 'others' choose to organise their enjoyment is as inaccessible to us as ours is to them. For this reason decisions about morality and about lifestyle can only be made within cultural boundaries, which for the commentators in the right-wing press are equivalent to national boundaries.

There are other examples outwith the specific discussions of the CFR, in which the customs and practices of other Europeans are seen as strange and impenetrable to the British observer. Justin Stares, for example, dedicates an entire article in the *Telegraph* to the opening of the 'VIP sauna' recently installed in the Berlaymont Building, the headquarters of the European Commission (Stares, *Telegraph*, 1 May 2005). The article purports to be about the excesses of the European political class and the excessive benefits to which they are entitled. However, alongside the details of how taxpayers money is allegedly being misused, the commissioners who will use the sauna are accused of an obsessive need for minute regulation and a strange predilection for nudity:

Ever the masters of punctilious regulation, the European Union's 25 Commissioner have outdone themselves with a code of conduct for their new and beautifully-appointed Brussels sauna. Nudity is *de rigueur*, according to the commission's infrastructure office, but bravado is not. "Reckless competition about who stands heat best is out of the question. Leave your clothes in the dressing room- nakedness is natural," the code tells its 18 male and seven female commissioners.

Here, British behavioural norms are implicitly contrasted to a heterogeneous set of 'European' norms. Whilst for the British, bravado and healthy competition are viewed positively, for the European they are to be avoided at all costs. By contrast, there is something seemingly suspicious to the British reader the about gratuitous nudity, particularly in a mixed sauna.

There is a process of cultural homogenisation at work in the discourse which sets a common set of European norms against the (incommensurable) British norms, but fails to offer any differentiation between, for example, Spanish and Finnish approaches to the sauna. In discourse theoretical terms we again see the predominance of the logic of equivalence over the logic of difference. Two competing equivalential chains of British and European norms emerge in which the shared commonality between the elements of these chains is highlighted, and any internal differences which exist between them downplayed. In highlighting what binds these chains together, what characterises them as British or European, however, we are simultaneously reinforcing their heterogeneity from the 'other,'

since it is in their common rejection of that which they exclude that that the unifying principle of a discourse is to be found.

The effect of this is to reinforce the sense of separation between the UK on the one hand, and the remainder of the EU on the other. Moreover, the construction of Britain as separation from Europe is reinforced by the fantasmatic constructions of the excessive enjoyment of the European ‘other.’ In this light the vehemence of the defence of the British way of life, be it in the economic or the cultural sphere, is brought into even sharper relief. The opposition to the ongoing process of European integration may not simply emanate from a utilitarian concern about the effects of a particular economic policy, or the correct level at which decisions on certain issues should be taken, but may tap into a deeper psychological attachment to the national way of life, and a concern to defend the national Thing from the strange and threatening practices of the ‘other.’

5.6 Concluding Remarks

It was argued in this chapter that the eurosceptic discourse of British national identity positions the UK outside of the EU. The terminology employed constructs a bilateral relationship between the UK and the EU, more akin to that which exists between two neighbouring states than between an international organisation and a constituent member-state. The EU is constructed as a unitary and internally homogenous actor to which a clear set of aims and motivation can be imputed. In addition, it is seen as a hostile, ‘foreign’ power which aims to gain ever greater control over the UK. The alleged aim of the EU to colonise the UK appears alongside the claim that the EU is an emerging superstate, which will reduce the UK to the status of a province in the United States of Europe.

Whilst the logics of equivalence and difference allow us to better understand the structure of the eurosceptic discourse, it is the Lacanian concept of fantasy which allows us to fully understand its enduring strength and the emotive appeal of these discourses. In light of the clear separation constructed between the UK in both political and cultural terms, and the affective attachment to a narrow exclusionary

construction of the nation which these discourse are able to engender, it is possible to comprehend the prevalence of exclusively national identities within the UK, and the high level of opposition towards the EU with which they are associated.

6. The British Economy v the 'European' Economy

In Chapter 4, it was argued that within the eurosceptic discourse Britain exists on the periphery of the EU, and that its power and influence within the EU is marginal compared to EU 'insiders,' such as France and Germany, for whose benefit the EU is run. In this sense, the divergence of interests constructed between Britain and France is not simply a dispute between two member-states of equal standing, but between Britain on the one hand, and the EU establishment on the other. This is reflected in the construction of a 'core' and a 'periphery' within the EU, and the idea of 'old' Europe, under Franco-German leadership, versus 'new' Europe, consisting of the CEECs under British leadership. In Chapter 5, meanwhile, it was argued that Britain is often positioned outside of the EU by the right-wing press which functions as the 'other' against which Britain is defined. The EU is constructed as a hostile, 'foreign' power which aims to usurp control of the UK.

In the present chapter, I will argue that both the inter-state rivalries examined in Chapter 4, and the separation constructed between Britain and the EU as a hostile 'other' analysed in Chapter 5, are evident also in the field of economic and labour market policy. The decision to devote an entire chapter to the question of economic policy is in part a response to the fact that the construction of Britain as an economic power within the eurosceptic discourse occurs in opposition both to a homogenised European 'other,' and a hostile coalition of 'core' EU member-states. Furthermore, it reflects the importance given to economic issues within the right-wing press in particular and the British press more generally. Debates about the EU focus heavily on the economic consequences of European integration, and the EU is seen primarily as an economic entity.

The construction of Britain as an economic power is a central component of Britain's identity according to the eurosceptic discourse. The commitment to free-trade and liberalised markets, it is argued, is what sets Britain apart from its neighbours. There is a clear sense of disdain for the inferior economic models and poor performance of the continental European economies. The latter are seen to

represent an outdated and discredited world view, which the UK has long since abandoned.

The construction of the UK as an economic power is facilitated by the presence of the Eurozone as a central reference point in debates about the economic fortunes of the EU. Whilst the strength and success of the British economy is repeatedly celebrated, the Eurozone is seen to be characterised by stagnation and high unemployment. In the same way in which it was argued in Chapter 5 that Britain is constructed in opposition to a particular construction of the EU as a homogeneous political entity, the Eurozone functions as a clearly identifiable European ‘other’ in the economic sphere, against which the British economy as a distinct entity is defined.

However, the British economy is constructed not simply in opposition to the Eurozone, but also the economies of the other EU member-states, such as France and Germany. There is seen to be a general set of characteristics which define the continental European economies regardless of whether they are members of the Euro or not. In discourse theoretical terms, there is an equivalence constructed between the economies of the continental European member-states, which emphasises their commonality and downplays the differences that exist between them. Britain is, therefore, constructed as an outsider in terms of economic policy, which stands in stark opposition to the established EU position.

As was argued in Chapter 4, France and Germany assume a metonymic function within the eurosceptic discourse, with their aims and interests being conflated with those of the EU *per se*. Whilst some differentiation between different national policies is evident – for example, between the economies of France and Germany, on the one hand, and those of Ireland, the Netherlands and the Scandinavian countries on the other – the Franco-German economic model is seen as representative of a broader European model institutionalised within the EU. The Franco-German economic model is that of the EU establishment, and those like Britain who pursue other policies are seen as the exception to the rule.

The separation constructed between the UK and the EU through the logic of equivalence is underpinned by a set of fantasmatic support structures. The idea of an anti-British conspiracy is repeated frequently in the newspaper articles analysed here. More specifically, it is argued that the EU, under the leadership of France and Germany, is jealous of the economic success experienced by the UK and, being unable to replicate British levels of growth and employment, is determined to undermine the policies which have brought this about. One way in which this will be achieved is through the Charter of Fundamental Rights (CFR), a document which is seen to enshrine the Franco-German economic model as the paradigm which all EU member-states will be obliged to follow.

The structure of this chapter is as follows: it begins by analysing the construction of the Eurozone as a political and economic entity. Section 6.2 looks at the construction of the Franco-German economic model and the process through which this is seen to be representative of the EU in general. Section 6.3 analyses the discussion of the CFR and the potential significance this has for the British economy.

6.1 Britain and the Eurozone

Questions about the economic performance of member-state economies provided the backdrop to the treaty reform process between 2003 and 2007. In the early part of this process, in particular, much debate surrounded the health of the Euro, the single European currency adopted by 11 member-states on 1 January 1999 and whose bank notes and coins had entered into circulation in January 2002.¹⁰ In the British general election of 2001, the issue of whether the UK should adopt the Euro had been a key point of debate and any lingering doubts that this would be a politically salient option for the Blair government were the object of a robust campaign in the right-wing press. They sought to highlight the problems experienced by the Euro and the Eurozone economies, and campaigned against the possibility, however remote, of the UK joining the currency union.

For example, the George Trefgarne reports in the *Telegraph* on 22 September 2005 that the ‘struggling’ Eurozone economy was forecast to grow by only 1.2% in the coming year as opposed to growth of 2.4 % in the British economy (Trefgarne, *Telegraph*, 22 September 2005). However, the report continues, even outside of the Euro, Britain was not immune from its economic ills: the growth forecast in the UK had been revised down from 2.7% largely as a result of the condition of the ‘flagging euro economy.’ In the same article, poor performance in the Eurozone was blamed on the ‘chronic lack of resilience’ exhibited by Eurozone economies ‘when it comes to economic shock’ as well as the ‘deterioration in public finances of some Eurozone countries.’ Britain plays the role of an absent ‘other’ in this article. Without overtly stating that the British economy is more flexible and has sounder public finances, merely highlighting these perceived weaknesses in the Eurozone underlines the relative health and resilience of the British economy.

A similar scepticism about the health and the viability of the Eurozone economies is evident in the *Mail*. It claims, for example, that the Eurozone economies ‘remain inflexible and ill-prepared to cope with unforeseen economic events.’ Consequently, ‘there is also evidence that joining the economically moribund Eurozone would damage employment in Britain’ (*Mail*, 6 June 2003). In the *Sun* too, we are told that the eurozone ‘is plunging headlong towards stagnation and inflation’ (Kavanagh, *Sun*, 26 May 2005).

Whilst the Eurozone was lambasted for its low growth and high unemployment, commentators in the right-wing press were full of praise for the achievements of the British economy outside of the Euro. As the *Mail* states on 9 June 2003 ‘Britain is doing just great outside the euro, thank you.’ Moreover, the article continues, ‘this country needs to be locked into a rigid sclerotic economic and monetary system like it needs a hole in the head’ (*Mail*, 9 June 2003). On 9 November 2004, Ruth Sunderland repeats this claim in the *Mail*. Whilst accepting that Britain’s economic fortunes remain tied to those of other countries, she argues

¹⁰ Subsequently, Cyprus (2008), Greece (2001), Malta (2008), Slovakia (2009) and Slovenia (2007) have also adopted the Euro.

that the UK nevertheless ‘does offer its own distinctive model of economic success’ (Sunderland, *Mail*, 9 November 2004). Evidence of this is the fact that ‘economic growth in the UK is [...] comfortably outstripping the Eurozone.’

In the *Sun* too, the success of the British economy is contrasted to the apparent failures of the continental European economies. Nic Cecil, for example, argues that whilst Britain has experienced relatively low levels of unemployment, ‘European style workers’ rights [...] have sent Euroland’s jobless total soaring to 15million’ (Cecil, *Sun*, 2 June 2003). Trevor Kavanagh, meanwhile, argues that ‘[s]ince we were bundled out of single currency preparations in 1992, Britain has enjoyed a record 12 straight years of growth’ (Kavanagh, *Sun*, 22 June 2004). Furthermore, he argues, ‘UK economic output is £16,440 per head of population, against Germany’s £15,904 and France’s £15,522’.

Similarly, the *News of the World* argues that the ‘[f]ailing economies in Germany and Italy tell us Britain was right not to blunder into the euro. As do soaring prices across the continent (*NOTW*, 5 June 2005 b). By contrast the British economy is booming according to Kavanagh (*Sun*, 10 June 2005 a):

Britain blithely continues the unbroken 13-year run of economic growth which began the wonderful day we crashed out of the single currency in September 1992. Since then, we have been transformed from Sick Man of Europe to the world’s fourth largest economy, pushing France into fifth place. All of this is abundantly clear to our envious neighbours. Italian politicians this week pointed to Britain’s independent currency as one way out of the recession which has engulfed their economy.’

The *Sun* asks also what Britain would be like today if it were to join the euro (*Sun*, 27 June 2006). ‘One thing’s for sure,’ the piece continues, ‘we would not be enjoying our position as one of the world’s strongest economies.’

6.1.1 *The Eurozone as Equivalential Chain*

The existence of the Euro and the entry into the political lexicon of the term ‘Eurozone’ as a collective term to identify those countries that have adopted the Euro

as their currency, meant that a dividing line could easily be constructed between those who were inside and those who were outside of the single currency. There was now a label readily available which could be attached to the insiders in order to signal their collective identity and their separation from the UK. Laclau (2005) has argued that the availability of a collective name or a common label under which identity positions can be subsumed has been argued by is of great importance in the discursive construction of political communities.

The emergence of the Eurozone as an identity position within the media debates about the EU is another example of the logic of equivalence in action and its subjugation of the logic of difference. The existence of such a readily available label under which the economies of continental Europe could be grouped together facilitated the homogenisation of the Eurozone economy in the prevailing discourse. The effect of this is to systematically downplay any internal differences which may exist between the different economies within this grouping, whilst emphasising the common difference which exists between the 'European' economies on the one hand, and the UK on the other.

It will be remembered from the discussion of the logics of equivalence and difference above that the unifying principle of any equivalential chain consists in the rejection or negation of some external element which symbolises the converse of that equivalence. In this instance, the unifying principle of the Eurozone economy as it is constructed in the right-wing press is its rejection or negation of the British economic model. The Eurozone economy exists as the very antithesis of the British economy. Similarly, the British economy emerges as a meaningful entity through its juxtaposition with the Eurozone economy. They are in a symbiotic relationship in which the one is dependent upon the other for its existence as a meaningful entity.

A clear example of this is found in an interview with by Jean-Philippe Cotis, Chief Economist of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD published in the *Mail*. As Edmund Conway reports on his conversation with Cotis (Conway, *Mail*, 26 May 2005):

The real problem with the euro, in his view, is that countries react differently to changes in interest rates. While in the UK we all notice when rates change since the majority of our mortgages are either floating rate or are fixed for relatively short periods this is not the case in Europe, where people frequently borrow on longterm fixed deals.

In this passage, there is an equivalence constructed between the 'European' economies which neglects the internal differences which may exist within this bloc between different national (and regional) economies. All of these, however, are seen to be fundamentally different in structure to the UK economy. Thus while the former are apt to join a single currency, the latter is not.

Elsewhere, a similar equivalence is constructed between the various Eurozone economies when it is argued that the economic problems experienced by certain member-states, such as France, are common to all members of the Eurozone (Rees-Mogg, *Mail*, 29 May 2005):

The economic problems of France are only part of the wider and more serious economic problems of the EU, and particularly of the so-called eurozone, the countries that have adopted the euro as their currency.

These articles fail to recognise that, whilst obvious similarities exist between the Eurozone economies, it is a simplification to suggest they are at the same time identical with one another and radically different from the UK.

Obviously, Britain was not alone in being both a member of the EU and remaining outside of the Eurozone. Denmark and Sweden also retained their own national currencies and Greece was also excluded from the initial wave of membership since it had been unable to meet the convergence criteria prerequisite for membership. However, discussion within the context of British newspaper debates tended to focus just on the UK, with only rare, passing references made to the other EU member-states not to adopt the Euro. The point of reference for the press is very much the Eurozone under the leadership of France and Germany as a collective economic entity, which is somehow separate from the UK.

6.1.2 *The Euro as Threat*

The discursive construction of the Eurozone as a counterpoint to the British economy is reinforced by the fantasmatic construction of the latter as a threat to the economic interests of the UK. It is repeatedly claimed that the UK could be forced to adopt the Euro as a result of the proposed Constitutional Treaty. A direct connection is made between the treaty reform process and Economic and Monetary Union (EMU). As Simon Heffer (*Mail*, 27 May 2003) comments in reference to the proposed Constitutional Treaty

The Giscard plan, as we have noted, allows massive scope for economic interference and control. It is unthinkable that, were we to sign up to that, we could avoid the euro as well.

In the *Telegraph*, George Trefgarne makes a similar point, seeing the adoption of the Euro as an inevitable consequence of a gradual process of Europeanisation that would be set in train by the adoption of the Constitutional Treaty (Trefgarne, *Telegraph*, 13 July 2003):

If Mr Blair signs the European constitution - which he seems determined to do - it will, as far as I can see, be the end of Britain as a serious independent power. It will also lead to the gradual redesigning of our institutional framework. The euro beckons. Taxation and regulation would increase as we tilted towards the European social democratic model.

In the *Sun* too, this line of argument is evident. George Pascoe-Watson, for example, cites Neil O'Brien, from the eurosceptic think tank *Open Europe*, who states that (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 19 May 2005):

People clearly realise that if we say yes to the constitution we will end up joining the euro. We all agree giving powers away to the EU is bad for the economy, bad for business and bad for democracy.

Much of the focus on the possibility of the UK joining the Euro, or being obliged to do so as a result of the ongoing treaty reform process, was evident towards the beginning of the time-frame analysed in this study, during the earlier debates surrounding the proposed Constitutional Treaty. This can be explained by the fact

that the question of British membership of the Euro was very much still alive at this time. In the lead-up to the final agreement of the Treaty of Lisbon, however, there was some reference made to the question of British membership of the Euro and the potential difficulties which could arise from a highly integrated EU in which the UK alone remained outside of the single currency. Martin Howe, for example comments that ‘a euro-based political union which includes the UK as a non-euro economy will be increasingly awkward for both sides’ (Howe, *Telegraph*, 19 October 2007).

Given the criticism made of the Eurozone, and the allegedly poor economic performance of the member economies in comparison to the UK, the idea that the UK should join the currency block is seen as being highly detrimental to the future economic prospects of the country. Much of the credit for the health of the British economy is attributed to the fact that the UK has remained outside of the Euro and has continued to retain autonomy over its monetary policy. It follows from this that joining the Euro would be detrimental to the UK economy. The argument is also made that many countries have experienced rising prices and economic stagnation since the adoption of the Euro, and are regretting their hasty decisions to join the single currency. Britain, it is argued, should be chastened by their experiences and not repeat the same mistakes (see Pascoe-Watson and Lea, *Sun*, 2 June 2005; Hague, *NOTW*, 5 June 2005; Alexander, *Mail*, 27 May 2005; Allen, *Mail*, 31 May 2005; Laird, *Mail*, 6 June 2005; Trefgarne, *Telegraph*, 15 October 2004; Moore, *Telegraph*, 14 May 2005).

6.1.3 The Euro as an Anti-British Conspiracy

If the UK’s membership of the Euro is against the national interest, it is seen to be potentially advantageous to the existing members of the Eurozone as it would place the same monetary and fiscal constraints on the UK as those to which existing members of the Eurozone are currently subject. The UK would, therefore, lose the competitive advantage it currently enjoys by virtue of its ability to run an independent monetary policy, and would be ‘dragged down’ to continental European

levels of economic output and unemployment. As Simon Heffer (*Mail*, 13 May 2005) argues:

The fact is that, outside the euro, and less regulated than our neighbours, Britain is simply too economically successful for some of its partners, and so handicaps must be shackled on to us.

Through Britain's membership of the Euro, existing member-states would be able to continue their project of building Europe through the means of the EMU, without being faced with the cold winds of competition sweeping in from the North Atlantic.

The idea emerges that membership of the Euro is a political tool that can be used to undermine Britain and increase the relative strength of other EU member-states. The impression is created of a plot to undermine the efficient and competitive British economy by forcing it to join the economic folly of a single European currency. The motivation for this seems to be twofold. On the one hand, it is ideological in nature, since British membership of the Euro would constitute a significant step along the path towards European unity. The aim of the EMU project, therefore, appears to be to sacrifice Britain's independence and prosperity at the altar of the European integration project. On the other hand, the motivation for co-opting the UK into the Euro, seemingly against its will, is motivated by jealousy on the part of other member-states (and their allies in the European Commission) about the apparent economic success enjoyed by the UK.

In Lacanian terms, it can be argued that this anti-British plot constitutes a 'theft of enjoyment' or an assault on the national Thing (see Žižek, 1993: 200 ff). The structure of the economy is central to the national 'way of life', and the particular way in which the British (or the French, or the Germans) organise their relationship to work and economic production can be interpreted as a form of national *jouissance*. Consequently, the construction of the British economy under threat from the potential expansion of the Eurozone demonstrates both the fundamental separation which exists between the British national 'enjoyment' and a heterogeneous, European form of *jouissance*, and the threat posed to the former by the latter. The undermining of the British economic model, therefore, constitutes an

assault on a key characteristic of the British 'way of life' and its sacrifice at the hands of a foreign power. As was argued in Chapter 5, by imputing to the European 'other' an attempt to steal or curtail this enjoyment in the right-wing press, it brings about a traumatic confrontation with the Real. In this respect we can understand the apparent depth of emotional investment in the issue of the economy and the apparent threat posed to the British economic model in psychoanalytic as well as purely rational terms.

In summary, the Eurozone as an identity position within the eurosceptic discourse of British national identity functions not only as the 'other' against which Britain *qua* economy is defined, but as a hostile 'other' which poses a direct threat to Britain's economic well being. This threat, it is argued, is not purely material, but taps into the deeper issues of individual subjectivity as conceptualised by Lacanian theory. The representation of the EU in such conflictual and vindictive terms can go some way to explaining the virulence with which further European integration is opposed by many people in the UK.

6.2 The British v The European Economic Model

The separation of the UK from continental Europe in terms of economic policy was not confined to the issue of membership of the Euro. A more general set of economic characteristics are presented as typifying the UK economy on the one hand and the 'European' economies on the other. The overwhelming impression given in the right-wing press is of the UK as a modern, flexible, dynamic, economy which is well placed to meet the new challenges arising from the emergence of China and India as global economic players. The UK, it is argued, favours free-trade, liberal markets and a minimal role for the state in managing the economy. The 'European' economy, by contrast, is seen as the exact opposite of this. It is portrayed as overregulated, inflexible and overburdened by the costs of social security provisions. It is characterised by an underlying reticence about the benefits of free trade and a residual statism which renders it unfit to meet the challenges of an increasingly globalised economy.

The argument presented in this section draws on and extends the argument presented in Chapter 4; that France and Germany are constructed within the eurosceptic discourse as occupying a position of such pre-eminence within the EU that their position on certain issues is synonymous with that of the EU more generally. The idea of the EU which emerges from this is identical to the concept of a 'core' Europe – centred around France and Germany – from which the UK is excluded, and against which its position within the EU is defined. This conflation of France and Germany with the EU more generally is clearly evident in the context of debates about the European economy. The French, German, and (to a lesser extent) the Italian economies are seen as to be representative of the EU as a whole and the problems experienced by these economies are presented as being exemplary of broader trends associated with the economies of western Europe.

6.2.1 Labour Market Regulation

The economic problems faced by continental European economies are seen to result principally from the overregulation of markets, which has the effect of stifling competition and distorting the optimal allocation of resources through correctly functioning markets. The tendency towards high levels of labour market regulation is associated with high levels of taxation which, in turn, is seen to have a similarly negative effect on the economy as the apparent over-regulation.

Roger Bootle claims in the *Telegraph* that whilst, as a result of deregulation, the UK economy has been a 'comparative success story over the last 20 years,' most other member-states 'are a massive failure' (Bootle, *Telegraph*, 22 October 2007). The reason for this, he continues, is that:

they have stopped their labour markets from functioning effectively, presided over huge public debts which threaten to become unsustainable under the weight of unfunded pension policies, and are in thrall to aggressive, depredatory trade unions, as evidenced in France last week.

On the 3 June 2005, David Rennie in the *Telegraph* singles out the French, German and, above all, the Italian economies as being a particular cause for concern

(Rennie, *Telegraph*, 3 June 2005). Similarly, Simon Heffer argues that the ‘the big European economies – notably France and Germany – are basket cases with low growth, massive unemployment and falling shares of export markets’ (Heffer, *Mail*, 13 May 2005). Their problems, he argues, lie in the fact that they have ‘inflexible, strike-prone labour markets which have prevented [them] from reviving their economies after the collapse of traditional manufacturing and heavy industry.’ In the same article, Britain is identified, along with Spain, Ireland and the Nordic states, as one of the good examples of a successful economy that these laggards could follow if they possess the political will to address the issues they face. In the *Sun* too, there is much criticism of the economic policies pursued by continental European states. George Pascoe-Watson, for example, argues that ‘France's economy has been crippled in the last five years due to [...] laws - like those banning anyone from working more than 38 hours a week’ (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 11 June 2007).

Britain, by contrast, represents the economic success which results from liberalisation of labour markets and a non-interventionist state. The *Mail*, for example, reports that Conservative Party Leader Michael Howard has called for ‘an enterprise Europe’ in which the type of liberal policies which have succeeded in Britain would be replicated at the EU level too (Hughes, *Mail*, 2 June 2004). In the *Mail*, meanwhile, we are told that ‘Britain currently enjoys a striking economic advantage over other member-states in that our labour market is far more flexible than theirs’ (Heathcoat Amory, E, *Mail*, 12 June 2003).

However, despite the clear philosophical divide which – it is claimed by commentators in the right-wing press – exists between the UK and ‘Europe’ over the management of the economy, Britain is unable to escape the negative side-effects of over-regulation at the EU level. David Hughes argues, for example, that the proposed EU constitution would be ‘a giant ball and chain on the British economy’ (Hughes, *Mail*, 29 October 2004). Hughes goes on to quote a speech from then Conservative Party Leader Michael Howard in which he argues that Britain's efforts to boost its economic competitiveness would be ‘pointless unless we tackle the problems at the heart of the European Union.’

Similarly, concerns are raised in the *Mail* by the Confederation of British Industry (CBI) about the potentially devastating effects of the Working Time Directive and the 48 hour week on certain sectors of the British economy (Merrick and Wilson, *Mail*, 12 May 2005). Elsewhere, it is argued that without the economic burden placed on the UK by ‘Brussels,’ the UK economy would boom (*Mail*, 25 June 2004). This point is echoed by Helm and Waterfield writing in the *Telegraph*, who argues that ‘Britain’s “opt-out” from the Working Time Directive is a key reason for the competitiveness of the UK economy’ (Helm and Waterfield, *Telegraph*, 15 October 2007).

The *Sun* too is full of praise for the successful British economy, which it is claimed ‘has become the envy of Europe by limiting the powers of unions and boosting flexibility in the workplace’ (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 20 June 2003). As a result of these measures, the article continues, ‘Britain has turned itself into a thriving low-tax economy.’ The ‘British-style free market economy, we are told, ‘encourages enterprise and tries to lift the heavy hand of state bureaucracy from everyday life’ (*Sun* 28 May 2005). A *Sun* editorial from 2004 (*Sun*, 16 June 2004) again underlines the apparent superiority of the British economy, arguing that:

Britain has power in Europe. That power comes from the example we set. We have a dynamic, free market, enterprise economy. We have low unemployment because this is a land where those who want to work hard get on and taxes are low- although not nearly low enough.

6.2.2 Economic Reform

Given the dire state of the continental European economies reported in the right-wing press, there seems to be an imperative for continental European economies to reform. However, there is an apparent inability, or unwillingness, on behalf of both the citizens and political elites to confront the situation in which they find themselves, and to embark on the painful process of deregulation. The *Mail*, for example, reports a speech by Prime Minister Gordon Brown in which he too lambasts the unwillingness of continental Europe to reform their economies and tackle the structural weaknesses which hinder economic growth. We are told how Brown will argue that ‘British prosperity is at risk from Europe’s unwillingness to

tackle the economic failings crippling France and Germany' before calling for 'root and branch economic reform in the EU' (*Mail*, 17 May 2005). Trevor Kavanagh argues meanwhile that EU countries ought to take their lead from the economic success enjoyed by the USA over the preceding two decades and embrace the reforms needed to ensure future economic success. 'Far from treating America as an enemy,' he argues, 'the EU must do what America did under Ronald Reagan in the 1980s and modernise its economies' (Kavanagh, *Sun*, 11 June 2003).

Elsewhere it is the UK rather than the USA which offers the model continental European economies ought to follow, whilst the French economy is singled out for especially strong criticism for its inefficient economic model and its outdated perception of the correct role of the state in the lives of individual citizens. The *Sun*, for example, tells us that 'France and the rest of Europe were last night urged to copy Britain's booming economic blueprint' (*Sun*, 31 May 2005). The following day, the *Sun* reports on a meeting between Prime Minister Blair and French President Chirac in which Blair warned Chirac 'that Europe has to ditch archaic work practices to rescue its sickly economy' (Cecil, *Sun*, 1 June 2005).

Peter Hitchens argues that the reluctance to reform the French economy is based on a deep-seated fear of individual responsibility and an over-reliance on the protection of the state which is evident throughout French society. Despite its post-war prosperity, Hitchens argues, France is a country surprisingly reminiscent of East Germany in which 'even the conservatives are socialists' by UK standards and there is a pervasive fear of independence and competition (Hitchens, *Mail*, 15 May 2005). In the same article, he refers to France as 'a nation of mummy's boys, suspicious of independence and the cold winds of competition.' Britain represents the antithesis of this, a manly acceptance of the harsh realities of then world and the value of self sufficiency and independence.

In the *Telegraph*, meanwhile, Colin Randall reports on the May Day protests in France. According to the report, protesters were angered about high levels of unemployment (which at 10.2% had reached the highest level in five years), the

rising cost of living, falling real-terms income, and the abolition of a national holiday (Randall, *Telegraph*, 3 May 2005). The impression created is of an economy stagnating as living standards fall. The French, however, appear to be unwilling to abandon their 'social model' – involving strong employment protection, shorter working hours and generous social benefits – which by implication is seen as the cause of their current economic malaise.

Whilst France is presented as being in economic decline, the UK is celebrated for having gone through painful but necessary economic reforms under Margaret Thatcher's government in the 1980's. The British economy, we are told, 'is the world's fourth largest thanks to painful workplace reform' (Kavanagh, *Sun*, 22 June 2004). The Thatcherite reforms are seen in the right-wing press as a model for other European states to follow on the road to economic prosperity. The UK is singled out by the OECD as 'a shining example to other member-states of how a modern competitive economy ought to be run' (*Mail*, 8 June 2005 b). Having reported, somewhat vaguely, that the OECD had singled out the UK as 'the best place to do business,' the report continues that '[t]he Paris-based think-tank warned that other European countries must carry out the same reforms, curbing state regulation, or face economic disaster.

There are no shortage of voices within the worlds of politics, business and the media who are willing to champion the cause of reform. We learn that 'the CBI is clamouring vociferously for economic reform in the EU' (*Mail*, 9 November 2004). We are even told that some economic commentators in France are calling for reform and hold the UK up as an example for France to emulate. According to Colin Randall, the financial magazine *Capital* has praised the liberal economic policies of the UK and implied that these would provide the solution to France's economic problems (Randall, *Telegraph*, 3 May 2005).

However, it is argued repeatedly that the Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty have singularly failed to address the economic weaknesses endemic in the European economy. Referring to the proposed Constitutional Treaty, Ferdinand

Mount claims in the *Telegraph* on 1 June 2005 that ‘the economic policies which have done so much harm have been entrenched in this very document’ (Mount, *Telegraph* 1 June 2005). The *Mail*, meanwhile, quotes Derek Scott, a former economic adviser to Tony Blair, who dismisses the Constitution as a ‘heady brew of bad politics and bad economics,’ which would ‘entrench Europe’s economic failings and drag Britain down’ (*Mail*, 28 October 2004). This point is repeated again by William Rees-Mogg in the *Mail* on 31 October 2004, who claims that ‘European costs and taxes are too high, regulations too tight.’ Consequently, he continues, ‘European industry is being strangled’ (Rees-Mogg, *Mail*, 31 October 2004). The Constitution, he continues, ‘is an obstacle to reform in the future. It centralises a structure already too centralised; it tightens a structure already too rigid’ (Rees-Mogg, *Mail*, 31 October 2004).

Despite these dissenting voices, the solution offered by EU member-states, such as France, is not to reform and deregulate, but to try to protect themselves and their social model by reproducing this form of economic management at EU level. The *Sun* reports, for example, that ‘Mr Chirac moved to shore up Europe’s ailing social economic model against the free market crusade of Mr Blair’ (Cecil, *Sun*, 1 June 2005). In the *Mail*, Michael Clarke argues that, as a result of the Constitutional Treaty ‘economic policy would have to be “better coordinated” across Europe - raising the prospect of extra Brussels interference’ (Clarke, *Mail*, 26 May 2003).

The following day, Edward Heathcoat-Amory highlights that whereas the first draft of the Constitutional Treaty promised that ‘the Union would work towards a free single market,’ the new version promises ‘a social market economy aiming at full employment and social progress’ indicating a shift towards the Franco-German model of economic policy (Heathcoat-Amory, E, *Mail*, 27 May 2003). The express aim of this shift in emphasis, he claims, is to undermine the successful British economy:

with its power to coordinate our economic and employment policy, the Commission will be well placed to ensure that Britain’s market economy is not too free

Sarah Oliver meanwhile, argues that the Constitutional Treaty, enshrining a French inspired economic model on the EU, could mean a return for Britain to the industrial disputes of the past (Oliver, S, *Mail*, 15 June 2003):

To those who remember the industrial strife of the Seventies, the power and extremism of the trade unions in France will be horribly familiar and a grim warning of what life could be like under Giscard d'Estaing's federal European constitution.

The implication is that the political leaders in continental Europe are unwilling to reform their own failing economies, and see the liberalised British economy as a threat to their existing form of economic management. Consequently, their aim is to undermine the British economy and the competitive advantage it is seen to enjoy over those of its neighbours. Former Europe Minister Denis MacShane is quoted by Nic Cecil, making precisely this point (Cecil, *Sun*, 1 December 2004):

Denis MacShane blasted Brussels yesterday for trying to “punish” Britain over its buoyant economy. The Europhile minister accused eurocrats of trying to strangle Britain's job market with bureaucracy. Mr MacShane [...] told EU ambassadors in London: “I am surprised at the desire of so many in Brussels to punish Britain. If you took out the UK contribution in growth and job creation, Europe's economic performance statistics would be much worse. “But what is the response of member-states? It is to seek to destroy the active labour market Britain is promoting.”

In another article, the Chairman of the Confederation of British Industry at the time, Digby Jones, asks ruefully ‘[w]hen will Brussels leave alone our successful, flexible labour market that has kept so many people in the UK in work?’ (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 8 July 2003). The implication is that the directive in question, whilst applying across the EU, is designed to target the British economy in particular since other countries already suffer from the type of stifling regulation (and high unemployment) that it will bring about.

The unwillingness of the French to reform their economy is seen as evidence that they are rooted in the past in with an outdated view of the correct role of government and the challenges and threats which face the European economies.

Tony Blair is quoted as saying that the policies promoted by some national leaders are rooted in the past: '[t]he idea that job protection and a closed economy is the best way to guarantee businesses surviving is outdated' (Kavanagh, *Sun*, 13 May 2005). Later that month, George Pascoe-Watson supports Blair's intervention in the debate, arguing that '[t]he PM is right to identify Europe's old-fashioned economies as the cause of their downfall' (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 31 May 2005 a).

The British economy is not the only success story in the EU. However, the economic achievements of other EU member-states are attributed to the fact that they have adopted the British (as opposed to the European) economic model. The CEECs, for example, are seen to have followed policies similar to those in the UK and are thus reaping the economic rewards. In this sense they are portrayed as allies of the UK in the fight against EU regulation which will undermine the advantages they currently enjoy. As Richard Littlejohn comments (*Sun*, 11 July 2003):

The countries of Eastern Europe who are about to join the EU have just shaken off the shackles of Soviet Communism and embraced free enterprise and capitalism, which is transforming their economies. They're not about to tie themselves into a corrupt, lumbering European socialist superstate. And that's not what the vast majority of the British people want, either.

A *Sun* editorial (*Sun*, 19 June 2004) repeats the point claiming that that '[t]he emerging former Communist countries, led by Poland, do not want to have their new-found flexible economies strangled by being forced into the straitjackets so loved by France and Germany.

The CEEC economies, like the UK economy, are also the cause of much ire amongst the leaders of countries whose economies are less flexible and competitive. In the *Telegraph*, Ambrose Evans-Pritchard claims that the French and German governments 'rage over the low tax rates in the new member-states of Eastern Europe, or zero corporation rates in Estonia' (Evans-Pritchard, *Telegraph*, 17 June 2004). France and Germany are unable to accept the prevailing economic orthodoxy, which has led to strong economic growth in the UK as well as the CEECs. They argue instead that these countries have an unfair advantage as a result of their deregulated economies and are determined to curtail the growth and prosperity

achieved within the UK, and other countries which have followed a similar economic path. David Rennie goes as far as to suggest that the EU is deliberately attempting to stymie moves towards reform by those few member-states who are willing to undertake the painful measures already undertaken by the UK, accusing European Council president Jean-Claude Juncker of “offering to buy off the reformist zeal” shown by Britain’s allies in the budgetary negotiations, Holland and Sweden (Rennie, *Telegraph* 18 June 2005).

6.2.3 Free Trade, Free Markets

A further dividing line between the British economic model and that of continental Europe concerns the attitude towards the free market and the role prescribed to the government within the management of the economy. Whilst the British are seen to play by the rules of the Single Internal Market (SIM) and demonstrate a faith in the concept of a market economy, other member-states such as France and Germany are accused of attempting to rig the market in their favour (*Mail* 16 November 2004). French advocacy of an interventionist industrial policy, in particular, is seen as evidence of the French government’s lack of faith in the functioning of free markets.

As agreement was reached on the final text of the Treaty of Lisbon, the apparent attempts by the French government to remove a specific reference to an internal market of ‘free and undistorted’ competition from the stated aims of EU received a great deal of attention within the British media. There are numerous reports of how treaty amendments proposed by France could lead to an end of the EU’s 50 year commitment to free trade. The *Mail*, for example, claims in the build up to the final agreement on the Lisbon Treaty that French President Nicolas Sarkozy ‘has vowed to defend French industry from outside forces and is keen to promote big state-backed firms’ (Brogan and Chapman, *Mail*, 23 June 2007). Ambrose Evans-Pritchard argued that this was an issue of such significance that the title of his article declared that ‘the UK must veto the treaty to save [the] market’ (Evans-Pritchard, *Telegraph*, 16 Oct 2007).

6.2.4 Europeanism v Internationalism

The unwillingness of certain EU member-states to reform their apparently sclerotic labour markets or to embrace free-trade in the form of the Single Internal Market (SIM) is seen as evidence of the underlying insularity of European governments. The EU and other member-states are accused of protecting the inefficient European economies from competition from more dynamic economies, such as those of the USA and China. They are criticised for attempting to create a highly-regulated internal market rather than attempting to open Europe up to the rest of the world. The *Mail*, for example, details how the EU has attempted to protect European textile producers from Chinese imports (Watkins, *Mail*, 5 June 2005). Unsurprisingly, the article goes on to say that whilst British companies have attempted to adapt to the new realities of the global economy, it is continental European companies which have sought protection, once more underlining the philosophical differences which exist between the two. There is also a clear distinction between ‘the new generation of entrepreneurial Chinese’ and the protectionist instincts of many Europeans represented by the position adopted on this issue by the European Commission.

Once again, Britain is seen to adopt a position diametrically opposed to that attributed to the Commission and to other continental member-states. The *Telegraph* (Helm *et al*, *Telegraph*, 17 June 2004) quotes a speech in which Chancellor of the Exchequer Gordon Brown argues that ‘[i]t is global Europe, not trade bloc Europe, that is the way forward.’ Three years later, David Trimble argues in a similar vein that ‘too many of our EU partners are stuck in the reactionary mindset of seeking to use the EU as a means of hiding from the rest of the world’ (Trimble, *Telegraph* 20 October 2007). Similarly, Ruth Sunderland, offers the following assessment of the economic situation confronting the EU when reporting from the CBI annual conference (Sunderland, *Mail*, 9 November 2004):

The overriding preoccupation of this year's conference is how Britain and the sclerotic economies of Europe can compete in an era of globalisation, where we are faced with a growing threat to jobs and wealth from China and the developing world on the one hand, and the dynamism of the US on the other.

It is noticeable how Britain is again separated from the sclerotic European economies within this passage, demonstrating the divide which exists between them in terms of the ability to react to the challenges they both face from more competitive economies in Asia and North America.

The UK, by contrast, is seen as the defender of free-trade within the EU and also between the EU and the rest of the world. As was argued above, the UK's commitment to free trade and economic liberalisation can be seen as part of a more general commitment within the right-wing press to the concept of liberty and freedom. The UK is often positioned as the defender of freedom in the realm of both economics and politics. Where the EU is seen as being insular and inward-looking, the UK is more global in its orientation. Britain is depicted as outward-looking and internationalist, by virtue of its maritime and colonial past. Therefore, it is uniquely placed to exploit the economic and geo-political realities of the 21st century in which we live in a highly interconnected world. David Trimble, for example, argues in the article cited above that an independent UK, outside of the EU, could be to act as a advocate for free trade in global for a such as the WTO (Trimble, *Telegraph* 20 October 2007).

Whilst other member-states have no alternative but to seek their place in the world via the EU, the UK has a genuine alternative due to its unique colonial past. Through its empire, the UK forged links across the globe and still retains a 'special relationship' with both the Commonwealth and with the USA, which represent a more natural alliance for the UK than the EU. The *Telegraph* (22 November 2004) argues, for example, that 'our true strategic interests – and, in particular, our alliances with other free, English speaking nations – are being tossed aside for the sake of Euro-dogma'. The terminology employed here by Sylvester is interesting, as it is reminiscent of the coverage examined in Chapter 4 in which it was argued that the process of European integration is driven forward by a form of supranational idealism. This dictates that the EU's policy competences must be expanded by any means possible in order to ensure the overall goal of political integration, which is

seen as an end in itself. No concern is given to practical interests as these must be sacrificed on the altar of Europeanism.

6.2.5 Equivalence, Difference and Fantasy

In the above section it was argued that there is an equivalence constructed between the continental European economies which emphasises their apparent similarities over the differences which exist between them. The unifying principle of this discourse is their common heterogeneity from what is seen as the British economic model. This positions the UK, once again, as an outsider in the EU whose economic policy runs counter to the prevailing EU consensus. It was argued in Chapter 4 that the EU position on many issues is seen to be dictated by policies of France and its ally Germany. This is again the case within the realm of economic policy. Although the different policy orientation of the CEECs are at times acknowledged in the right-wing press, they are presented as a minority position within the EU, and a deviation from the EU norm.

The construction of the flawed Franco-German economic policy as both the predominant articulation of economic policy in the EU, and as heterogeneous to the British policy, presents the UK as a country under threat from the ongoing treaty amendment process. It is argued that the Constitutional Treaty and Treaty of Lisbon represent an attempt by France and Germany to reproduce the failings of their domestic economies at the EU level. Given the relative success of the British economy to date, this is seen as an overt attempt to undermine the successful British economy by forcing it into the regulatory straightjacket imposed by the continental economic model.

The debates surrounding economic policy can be reinterpreted through the Lacanian concept of enjoyment. As was saw in Chapter 2, Žižek (1993: 203) argues that nationalist and racist discourse often attribute to the 'other' an excessive 'enjoyment,' often centred round their relationship to work. It was argued above that, according to the right-wing press, the European economic model involves a very different approach to free-market principles and the role of the state in regulating

economic activity. Workers in the UK enjoy – and expect – lower levels of social protection and labour-market regulation than those in continental Europe. The two economic models, therefore, represent entirely different attitudes to work or, in Lacanian terms, very different forms of enjoyment and processes for regulating this enjoyment. By attributing to the ‘European’ economies a strange and threatening form of work as ‘enjoyment’, the coverage in the right-wing press operates not simply at the level of discursive separation but draws on an underlying fantasmatic support structure.

The EU functions as an impediment to the realisation of the British national ‘mission’ in this context. If it were not for the EU, it is argued, the UK would be even stronger and even more successful; it would achieve its rightful position in the world. The narrative constructed here suggests the possibility of the UK as a fully reconciled society once this impediment to its progress is overcome (see Glynos and Howarth, 2007: 147-8). This in turn holds out the possibility of a stable social order able to confer on the subject the fully-constituted identity it seeks. In this sense, the construction of the EU as economic impediment taps into the fundamental ‘lack’ at the heart of the subject, something which may help us better understand the strength of emotion which anti-EU discourses are able to generate.

In summary, it was argued in this section that the UK and the remainder of the EU are presented as fundamentally heterogeneous in terms of economic policy. Whilst the UK is presented as a modern, liberal market economy which has adjusted to meet the challenges of the 21st century, the remainder of the EU is seen as insular, stagnating and overregulated. Although some attention is paid to the specific conditions in certain countries such as Italy, Germany and, in particular, France, these are presented as being indicative of a more widespread malaise affecting the EU. The effect of the coverage outlined above is to create a clear divide between Britain on the one hand, and what may be referred to as the EU establishment, represented by France and Germany, on the other.

6.3 The Charter of Fundamental Rights (CFR)

In the previous section it was argued that a divide is constructed between the British economy and what is presented as the European economic model, in which the British version is seen to be superior to that of continental Europe and to offer a model of successful economic management which EU leaders in continental Europe ought to emulate. In the current section, I will examine the representation of the controversial CFR within the debates about the Constitutional Treaty and the proposed Lisbon Treaty.

The CFR was included in both the above documents and proposed to enshrine a range of basic rights which should be enjoyed by all EU citizens. Interestingly, the coverage of the CFR constructed the latter as an economic – rather than a moral or social – issue. Amongst the various rights established by the CFR, the provisions which received the most attention, and the most outspoken criticism, were those enshrining the right to strike in EC law and guaranteeing certain minimum standards of employment protection. Many of the criticism of the treaty reform process evident in the right-wing press centred on speculation about the possible consequences of these measures on the British economy.

The British government were adamant that the CFR should not have legal effect in the UK, and made an opt-out from these provisions a ‘red-line’ issue in both sets of treaty negotiations. The efforts made by other leaders to include the CFR in both the Constitutional Treaty and its successor the Lisbon Treaty were taken as further evidence of the attempt by the leaders of ‘inefficient’ economies such as France (along with Italy and Germany) to consolidate, rather than reform, their sclerotic and outdated economic model and to reproduce this at the European level.

The *Sun*, for example, fears that the CFR ‘could strengthen trade union barons and cripple the booming economy’ (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 20 June 2003). Elsewhere, the *Sun* argues that ‘the blueprint will torpedo Britain’s economy’ (*Sun*, 29 October 2004). ‘Economists,’ the article continues, ‘predict firms will be crippled

and jobs lost.’ Some four years after the previous article was published, George Pascoe-Watson remains convinced that ‘[t]he Charter will also lumber Britain’s economy with job-destroying EU laws’ (Pascoe-Watson, *Sun*, 21 June 2007). Nic Cecil, meanwhile, reports that ‘Article 28 of the Charter of Fundamental Rights gives rights to strike far wider than those that exist in Britain’ (Cecil, *Sun*, 2 June 2003). In the same article we learn that MPs are concerned that the proposed European Constitution, allied with reawakening of trade-union militancy could ‘undermine Britain’s economic success.’

David Hughes meanwhile comments that, as far as the Charter of Fundamental Rights is concerned, the ‘implications for business are untold’ (Hughes, *Mail*, 29 October 2004). We learn that the Charter may render illegal anti trade-union legislation such as the ban on closed shops and on secondary picketing in the UK. Paul Eastham, for example comments that the CFR ‘creates a right to strike, undermining British labour laws and allowing the army and police to strike for the first time’ (Eastham, *Mail*, 19 June 2004).

Interestingly, the critique of the CFR and its economic consequences is made in terms of the national interest and the benefits which will arise for the UK economy as a whole. It is argued that it will harm the economic prospects of the country were these rights to be upheld. For example, in the *Telegraph* article referred to above (Helm and Waterfield, *Telegraph*, 15 October 2007) we learn of business leaders’ concern that Britain’s opt out from the Working Time Directive is crucial to maintaining the competitiveness of the UK economy in general. It would appear then that an opt-out from the CFR is in the interest of the entire country.

Whilst this line of argument has some intuitive plausibility, on closer examination it becomes clear that the interests of certain sections of the population (employers, the business community) are being portrayed as synonymous with the interest of the country as a whole. Whilst it may be true that a steadily growing and competitive economy will create employment for a significant percentage of the population, a more nuanced examination of the structure of the economy and the

distribution of wealth is necessary if we are to judge precisely who benefits to what extent from the proceeds of economic activity. The interests of different groups of people in different parts of the economy will in fact differ greatly. If the proceeds of economic growth remain concentrated in the hands of shareholders and senior executives within an organisation rather than being redistributed to employees at all levels in terms of higher wages and benefits, those who may be required to work longer hours to achieve higher productivity, or those who lose their jobs in the search for greater competitiveness may feel that their interests are not best served by the form of economic organisation advocated within the right-wing press. They may feel instead that their interests are better served by the adoption of the CFR than by the vehement defence of their freedom from regulation.

Privileging the interest of business leaders and employers, and equating what is good for them with what is good for the country in general, reflects the more general veneration of the business community evident in these newspapers. Business leaders have a kudos and speak with an authority which is diametrically opposed to the cynicism and derision directed at politicians and administrators, even at a national level. Simon Wolfson makes sure to tell us of his credentials as a businessman who is reluctant normally to comment on political issues (Wolfson, *Telegraph*, 29 October 2004). He, one assumes is too busy with the more important task of creating wealth to bother with the petty intrigues of government, yet even he is driven to enter the debate on the issue of the constitution such is its monumental importance.

In addition to the concerns in the right-wing press about the specific effects of the CFR on the British economy, there is a more general scepticism evident about the very concept of rights evident in their coverage of the EU treaty reform process. The CFR ensures (among other things) the minimum standards of employment protection which EU citizens should be able to expect, including the maximum number of hours citizens should work and the right to trade union representation. Given the ideological stance of the newspapers studied here, it is perhaps unsurprising that they

appear to prioritise the rights of employers over those of their employees, except where the right of employees to work more is called into question.

Both the *Telegraph* and the *Mail* favour deregulated labour markets and so view the EU's attempts to introduce measures which curtail these as an unreasonable restriction of the market and the freedom of individuals to negotiate their own terms of employment. By contrast they are keen to defend the freedom of workers to work as many hours as they see fit, free from interfering regulations which may limit the length of time they may work. The *Telegraph*, for example, reports that the new 'EU treaty could spell the end of overtime' and that workers 'may lose their *right* to work more than 48 hours a week' (Helm and Waterfield, *Telegraph* 15 October 2007, emphasis added).

A similar point is made in regard to retirement law. We are warned that workers hoping to work beyond the age of 65 years old had suffered a blow at the hands of the ECJ judges, who ruled that employers are able to force people out of their jobs once they reach their country's minimum retirement age (Helm and Waterfield, *Telegraph*, 17 Oct 2007). It would seem, therefore, that the only right worth defending is the right of people to work longer hours, whilst their right to be free from exploitation and to expect certain minimum standards of employment is of no concern to those in the right-wing press.

In summary, the CFR is presented as being a primarily economic issue which poses a clear threat to the economic interests of the UK. It is a further example of the EU as threat, and plays into the fantasies of domination and subjugation examined above. In addition, it provides another example of the underlying nationalism of British debates about the EU. There is a clear privileging of the national interest over other sectoral interest such as class. It is to be expected British citizens should oppose the CFR on the grounds it represents interference in British affairs by a foreign body, or because it is detrimental to a particular construction of the national interest. At no point is it addressed as a political issue effecting different sections of the population in different ways. This is indicative of the construction of the EU in

intergovernmental terms and the inability of commentators within the right-wing press to view the EU through anything other than the conceptual lens of the state.

6.4 Britain as Europe's Saviour

It was argued above that the UK is seen in the right-wing press to represent an economic model superior to that pursued by the majority of EU member-states and, in particular, the largest and politically most influential members-states: France, Germany and Italy. Evidence of the superiority of the British model is the higher level of economic growth and the lower level of unemployment experienced by the UK compared to continental Europe during the period examined here. In this section I will argue that commentators in the right-wing press see the UK as having an almost messianic role in the EU. It is the responsibility of the UK to spread the gospel of sound economic practice and, in so doing, save the Europeans from themselves.

The role of the UK as economic saviour draws also on a longer-standing narrative of the UK as military saviour. The latter focuses on the British role in liberating the European continent from the threat of Nazism during WW2 and, further in the past, from Napoleon. As is the case with the economic danger confronting Europe today, the past military threats emanated from France and Germany, and pitted the latter against the UK as the last defence against their expansionist tendencies. The connection between the role of the UK as military saviour in the past and her present role of economic saviour is nowhere clearer than in the title of Simon Wolfson's article in the *Telegraph* in which he implores his readers to 'Vote No to the Constitution, and Save Europe from Itself (again)' (Wolfson, *Telegraph*, 29 October 2004).

Within the right-wing press, Britain is constructed as being the antithesis of the EU, the latter mired as it is by political stagnation, economic backwardness and an inability to respond to the challenges of the 21st century. In the sections above it was argued that the UK is seen to be leading the calls within the EU for economic

reform, something which is resisted by France and Germany. The remainder of the EU, it is argued, would be able to enjoy the same levels of prosperity allegedly enjoyed by the UK if it, too, were to adopt the same policies as those pursued in the UK. The economic ills of the EU are seen to be the result of a reluctance, or inability, of the continental European economies to reform themselves to respond to the new realities with which they are faced. The UK, as an outsider to the European establishment, and having gone through its own process of restructuring during the 1970s and 1980's, is perfectly positioned to show the rest of the EU the way out of their current malaise.

David Rennie quotes Europe Minister Dennis MacShane who makes precisely this point (Rennie, *Telegraph*, 30 May 2005). MacShane argues the UK can lead the way for other EU member-states who wish to escape the current financial crisis in which they find themselves:

The crisis will not be solved until Paris, Berlin and Rome are prepared to take the path of economic growth and job creation, following the lead of Britain, the Nordic countries and Spain.

Similarly, Toby Helm reports that Gordon Brown and Tony Blair will attempt to make economic reform the priority for the EU in the wake of the failed French and Dutch referenda on the Constitutional Treaty (Helm, *Telegraph*, 3 June 2005:

They think that the EU should postpone talk of constitutions until it has drawn up a modern economic philosophy that will allow it to meet the challenges posed by emerging economies, especially in China and other Asian nations, with cheap labour costs and dynamic research and science sectors.

As EU leaders had embarked on a period of reflection to consider the options open to the EU in the wake of the French and Dutch referendum results, there is a call from the *Telegraph* editorial on 19 June 2005 for British Prime Minister Tony Blair to appeal 'over the heads' of leaders in other member-states directly to their peoples in an attempt to halt the possible revival of the Constitutional Treaty (*Telegraph*, 19 June 2005). This appeal is interesting for a number of reasons and

highly revealing about the ideology which underpins the position of the right-wing press (and indeed I argue many citizens) in the UK towards the EU. Firstly, the idea that Blair would be able to appeal over the heads of national leaders to their peoples creates a clear dichotomy between the political leaders on the one hand and the citizens they are supposed to represent on the other. The assumption is also of an internal homogeneity of interests and opinions towards the Constitutional Treaty amongst both the political elites in the first instance, and their electorates in the second. It assumes also that, whilst elites favour the introduction of the measures included Constitutional Treaty and its potential resurrection, the citizenry of the countries they lead are uniformly opposed to it.

This is obviously a crude simplification of what is a far more nuanced set of opinions and interests which exist on both sides of this supposed divide. Nevertheless, it reinforces the perception that the EU is an elite-run project in which citizens' voices are only listened to when they agree with the positions of their political masters. It should also be highlighted that the article in question, despite constructing the European citizenry as an internally homogenous body of opinion, never refers to European people but only to European peoples (in the plural). Europe has peoples but not *a people* (*Telegraph*, 13 June 2005). This is indicative of the position adopted by the *Telegraph* that the EU is (or at least ought to be) an intergovernmental organisation made up of sovereign nation-states, each with their own separate people, and who could never be subsumed into a single European people.

The idea that the British Prime Minister ought to speak over the heads of other leaders to their people is also remarkable for what it reveals about the position which Britain is assumed to occupy in relation to other states. The implication is that Britain can claim some kind of special status in the field of international relations. Its unique standing is such that it is able to bypass the governments of other member-states and speak directly to their citizens with a moral authority not afforded to other member-states. To realise the full significance of this invitation to Blair to lead a peoples' revolt, one need only think of the reaction there would have been within the

UK had a leader of another member-state taken it upon themselves to assume such a role. If Blair is able to speak on behalf of the people in a way no other leader can be called on to do then Britain is, to a certain extent at least, separated from the remainder of the EU not only in terms of the economic policies pursued by its government but the political weight with which the appeals for reform can be made. This combination of economic insight and political authority marks Britain out as a truly exceptional.

There are clear parallels drawn between the role of economic saviour in which the UK is now cast and its role as a military saviour in previous times. Britain's military history, like her supposed economic strength, is central to the national self-conception which underlies the reporting of EU politics within the right-wing press. These military victories, which are the source of such national pride and provide one of the key components of the narrative of British national identity, invariably involve British resistance against an aggressive European 'other.'

Most obviously, the role of Britain in the Second World War is highlighted with great regularity. However, Britain's history as a saviour of the continent extends far back beyond the Second and even then First World War. The Napoleonic Wars are also invoked as occasions from which Britain was able to save Europe from herself. For example, Michael Henderson in the *Telegraph* reminds us how the British 'saved the continent from Napoleon and Hitler' (Henderson, *Telegraph*, 27 October 2007). To underline the point he concludes the article by stating how it was 'our forebears who gave their lives to keep Europe free.'

Not only has Britain avoided invasion itself but, we are reminded by Tom Utley, Britain was in a very literal sense the source of Europe's liberation from tyranny in the 1940s, since it was from British ports that the D-Day landings were launched (Utley, *Telegraph*, 13 May 2005). Fortunately, the author goes on to argue, Britain, with its semi-detached position towards the EU, will once again be able to serve as a launch pad for its liberation if the EU does end up repeating the horrors of the Nazi and Soviet regimes. Britain now as then is the final enclave of freedom and

liberty in Europe and for this all Europeans ought to be grateful. Michael Henderson, in the article cited above, makes a similar point about Britain liberating the continent from tyranny in the *Telegraph* some two years later: ‘After all,’ he comments ‘it is this island race that saved the continent from Napoleon and Hitler, so it could be said we have done our bit to maintain order’ (Henderson, *Telegraph*, 27 October 2007).

In a similar vein, a *Sun* editorial from 2005 laments the irony that ‘the country which saved Europe during the war’ could have its own destiny decided by the French or the Dutch, who, unlike the British, were scheduled to vote on the Constitutional Treaty shortly after the publication of this article (*Sun*, 26 May 2005). This article reinforces the parallel between Nazi Germany and the EU, once more positioning each as Britain’s foe in a separate conflict; the former in WW2 and the latter in the over the European treaty reform process.

In summary, the construction of the UK as Europe’s saviour reinforces not only the narrative of British separation from the continent, but also the apparent moral, military, and now economic superiority of the UK over continental Europe. Historically, the European continent symbolised a source of conflict and strife. Britain’s role was and is to fend off the threat it presents and to intervene to solve the problems it creates. This is fuel to the fire of those who argue that Britain’s interests are better served outside the EU. If the threat to the UK in past centuries came in the form of war with neighbouring states, that threat presently comes in the form of stifling regulation and outdated economic policies which find their institutional embodiment in an EU dominated by the same countries who once posed that military threat.

6.5 Concluding Remarks

From the examples presented above, it is evident that the economy is an issue of central importance in British debates surrounding the EU. The British economy is constructed as being different from, and superior to, the economies of other EU member-states, which share a common set of structural weaknesses that define their collective identity as European economies and set them apart from the UK. The

structure of these economies also reflects an underlying philosophical difference about the role of the state in the management of the economy and the position of the EU in the world.

The construction of the British economy as fundamentally heterogeneous to those of its continental neighbours is facilitated in part by the existence of the Eurozone as an economic bloc against which the British economic model can be defined. This mirrors the argument presented in Chapter 5 that Britain is constructed against an internally homogenous European 'other.' At other times, however, the British economy is constructed in opposition not simply to the Eurozone, but to a broader concept of the European economic model based on the economies of France and Germany. As was argued in Chapter 4, Britain is constructed as an 'outsider' in the EU, clearly separated from the 'core' member-states such as France and Germany.

The ongoing treaty reform process is constructed in the right-wing press as an attempt by member-states such as France and Germany to reproduce their discredited economic model at the EU level, and to force the UK to adopt a trans-European economic policy moulded in their image. This is seen, for example, in the coverage of the CFR as a threat to Britain's flexible labour market. Consequently, the European integration process is constructed as undermining to the economic wellbeing of the UK. In this respect, it is supported by the fantasies of domination and repression examined in previous chapters. The UK, however, offers an alternative path for the EU to follow. The superiority of the British economic model means that it falls to the UK to save the EU from itself and to lead other member-states towards its own economic model.

7. The EU in the Left-Wing Press

The previous three chapters set out an account of the eurosceptic discourse of British national identity found within the right-wing press. The present chapter will examine the coverage of the EU constitutional debates in the left-wing press. It will examine the principal themes which emerge out of the coverage of the EU treaty reform process in the latter, and will compare and contrast the constructions of Britain and Europe which emerge from this with those emanating from the right-wing press.

It will be argued in this chapter that it is impossible to speak about the left-wing press as a collective entity in the same way in which we are able to refer to the right-wing press in previous chapters. The coverage of the EU in the *Guardian* is vastly more extensive than that in the *Mirror*, and so many themes present in the former are absent of the latter. Consequently, it is more accurate to discuss each title separately than to group them together. The term left-wing press will be employed however when discussing themes which are evident in both the *Mirror* and the *Guardian*.

In addition, although the coverage of the EU in both the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* positions itself in opposition to the voices of euroscepticism they identify in the right-wing press, it is not possible to identify a single, unified pro-EU discourse which emerges from these titles. The coverage in both the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* gives voice to a range of (sometimes contradictory) opinions about certain issues. Whilst it is possible, therefore, to identify a consistent line of argument across the titles in the right-wing press, no such consensus is evident in the titles analysed here. Instead, there is a plurality of competing voices in evidence, articulating a variety of positions towards the EU.

The coverage of the EU in the *Guardian* offers a more sophisticated and nuanced account of the relationship between member-states and the EU institutions than that offered in the right-wing press, and attempts to break down the equivalences constructed in the eurosceptic discourse. This is particularly evident in

the coverage of the European economy in which many of the arguments presented in the right-wing press are called into question.

The structure of the chapter is as follows. Section 7.1 examines the construction of the EU as a political entity and the position which the UK is seen to inhabit in relation to it. Section 7.2 examines the relationship between the UK and the other member-states of the EU, whilst Section 7.3 examines the issue of the economy. Finally, Section 7.4 will examine the voice of euroscepticism represented by two columnists whose arguments mirror those of the right-wing press. Given the range of issues to be discussed, this chapter is somewhat longer than those preceding it. However, because of the links which exist between each section, the decision was made to present the arguments developed here in a single chapter.

7.1 Constructing the EU

In the eurosceptic discourse of British national identity, the EU is constructed as a sinister and hostile entity which poses a threat to democracy, and to the UK's political independence. In the titles examined in the current chapter, a very different image of the EU emerges. Both the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* are broadly sympathetic to the EU and supportive of the UK's membership of it. The EU is given credit for the unprecedented period of peace, stability and democracy experienced in Europe over the last half-century. The Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty are seen, therefore, not as further infringements on the UK's right of national self-determination, but as implementing necessary reforms which will allow an expanded Union of 27 member-states to function more effectively and efficiently.

In addition, the EU is positioned as a potential counterweight to the political and military hegemony of the USA in the context of debates surrounding the development of the EU Common Foreign and Security Policy. These arguments reflect a very different world-view from that which emerges in the right-wing press in which it is NATO – and not the EU – which is given the credit for ensuring peace

and stability in Europe and whose success in ensuring British security is seen to be jeopardised by the emergence of an EU defence capability.

7.1.1 The EU as a Source of Peace, Prosperity and Democracy

The argument made in the left-wing press is that the EU has been responsible for an unprecedented period of peace and stability in Europe. The EU is given credit for ending war between European states and guaranteeing stability in Europe for over fifty years; initially in Western Europe in the aftermath of WW2 and, following the fall of communism in Eastern Europe, in facilitating the transition to democracy in the former satellite states of the Soviet Union. In addition, there is an attempt to highlight the more prosaic, everyday benefits which arise to citizens as a result of the EU and also the specific benefits which the UK enjoys as a result of its membership of the EU.

As William Keegan comments: ‘the European Union has been a remarkable success story and has achieved the aims of its founders in binding Europe so closely together that another war is unthinkable’ (Keegan, *Observer*, 27 June 2004). Similarly, Polly Toynbee argues that ‘the union that has brought unprecedented wealth and trade, while dragging a host of priest-ridden poverty-stricken backward nations into democratic modernity’ (Toynbee, *Guardian*, 2 June 2004).

Former Foreign Secretary Robin Cook describes the results of the European integration process as being ‘a Europe of peace and democracy’ (Cook, *Guardian*, 29 October 2004). Writing on the eve of the signing ceremony of the Constitutional Treaty, Cook continues to detail the fact that many of the states now sitting together in the Council chamber have within living memory been at war with one another, whilst others were Soviet satellite states or under the control of military juntas (see also White, *Guardian*, 18 October 2007; *Mirror*, 21 June 2004; Blackman, *Mirror*, 22 June 2004).

The argument that the EU is responsible for peace and security in Europe stands in direct opposition to that presented in the right-wing press. As will be argued

below, it is NATO and not the EU which according to commentators in the right-wing press ought to be given credit for the guaranteeing the peace and security in Europe in the second half of the twentieth century.

Peter Mandelson argues that the success of the EU extends beyond the creation of peace and stability, and attempts to highlight the many rights and freedoms which EU citizens enjoy as a result of the Union. Unfortunately, he argues, European citizens have been so accustomed to these benefits, and the idea of European war has become so alien to younger generations of Europeans that the reason for these unprecedented levels of prosperity are forgotten (Mandelson, *Observer*, 5 June 2005):

The old European project of 'an end to war' has inevitably lost resonance. The freedoms Europe offers - democracy and human rights, the freedom to travel, study, work and settle in different countries - are taken for granted, though they should not be.

Writing in the same edition of the paper, Will Hutton laments the fact that whilst 'Europeans never knew they had it so good,' following the rejection of the Constitutional Treaty by voters in France and the Netherlands, history may judge them to have killed off the very institution responsible for their prosperity (Hutton, *Observer*, 5 June 2005). Like Mandelson, Hutton focuses on the everyday, practical benefits which have arisen for EU citizens as a result of the EU, citing cheap flights, free movement from country to country – and for many EU citizens – a single currency which can be spent at home as well as abroad (see also *Mirror*, 28 May 2003).

7.1.2 The Constitutional Treaty and the Treaty of Lisbon

It was argued in the previous section that the EU is seen within the left-wing press as being of clear benefit to the citizens of the EU. In this section, I will analyse the representation of the Constitutional Treaty. In stark contrast to its depiction in the right-wing press, the purpose of the treaty is seen to be the clarification and demarcation of the powers of the EU, the division of competences between the national and the supranational levels of governance, and the simplification of

decision making procedures within an expanded EU of 27 member-states. It is argued that these changes are needed to increase the efficiency of the Union and its ability to function following the enlargement of the EU in 2004 and 2007.

Travis *et al* comment, for example, that '[t]he constitution is designed to simplify and clarify EU decision-making and powers, before 10 states join next year' (Travis *et al*, *Guardian*, 20 June 2003). Ian Black argues similarly that '[t]he 59-article constitution is designed to make clear where power lies and thus increase the effectiveness and legitimacy of a club about to expand to 25 countries with 450 million people' (Black, *Guardian*, 14 June 2003). The *Observer* too comments that the Constitutional Treaty is '[d]esigned to streamline 40 years of treaties and agreements since the Treaty of Rome, supporters say the document will simplify the EU's legal framework to make an organisation that has grown to 25 nations run more efficiently' (*Observer*, 15 May 2005; see also Black, *Guardian*, 14 June 2004; Black and White, *Guardian*, 17 June 2004). As Will Hutton argues, in order 'to meet any ambitions for the future the EU has to hold together today. It needs an operational constitution for 25 member-states informed by a real belief that Europe is more than just a forum of nation-states' (Hutton, *Observer*, 1 June, 2003).

In addition to the general assertions that the Constitutional Treaty is needed in order to bring about greater efficiency in the EU, some specific aspects of the treaty are highlighted as being essential to this task. Again, the difference in the coverage here from that found in the rightwing press is clearly evident. For example, whilst the increase in the use of QMV for decision making within the Council of Ministers introduced by the Constitutional Treaty is depicted in the right-wing press as an intolerable threat to British sovereignty, here such changes are essential in order 'to avoid gridlock and streamline decision-making' (*Guardian*, 23 May 2005). Similarly, the argument is made that 'the EU should have a permanent president to chair summits instead of the unwieldy "musical chairs" system of rotating the presidency between member-states every six months' (*Guardian*, 15 May, 2003; see also Black, *Guardian*, 28 May 2003; Hutton, *Observer*, 5 June 2005)

Whilst commentators within the *Guardian* are keen to defend the changes brought about by the Constitutional Treaty, they are also keen to highlight the extent to which the document in question simply codifies existing policies and operating procedures within the EU. William Keegan, for example, comments that it is ‘a treaty (or “constitution”, as Valéry Giscard d’Estaing insists on calling his document) that in most key areas confirms the status quo’ (Keegan, *Observer*, 27 June 2004). This stands in stark contrast to contentions of commentators in the right-wing press and the Conservative Party, who wish to present long-standing, but little known aspects of the EU’s institutional architecture enshrined within the Constitutional Treaty as new and frightening developments being foisted upon the British people by the megalomaniacs and state-builders in Brussels. As Keegan argues ‘[m]any of the things the eurosceptic press complains about were accepted by Conservative governments in previous treaties’ (Keegan, *Observer*, 27 June 2004).

Similarly, as Hugo Young comments, the aim of ‘ever closer union’ between the peoples of Europe, and the supremacy of EU law over national law have been part of the *acquis communautaire* since before the UK acceded to the then EEC (Young, *Guardian*, 27 May 2003):

“ever-closer union” of the peoples of Europe was in the open text of the Treaty of Rome 1957, yet is now regarded as an intolerable new ambition that the British must expunge from the Giscard draft. Equally neuralgic is the supremacy of EU law over domestic law, as if this too were part of the new federalist overreach that is about to tear apart the British legal system. But that doctrine was established in 1965, 10 years before the first referendum.

Young’s point is echoed by Robin Cook, who argues that ‘If Britain votes no [to the Constitutional Treaty] on these grounds, we are rejecting the very basis on which we became members’ (Cook, *Guardian*, 29 October 2004)

In the *Mirror* too, commentators aim to challenge what they identify as ‘eurosceptic lies’ (Davidson, *Mirror*, 27 May 2003; see also Roberts, *Mirror*, 27 May 2003). This article lists almost two pages of allegedly false claims made by the right-wing press, each of which is refuted in turn. The same day the *Mirror* editorial (27 May 2003) reinforces the position that much of the reporting in the right-wing

press is inaccurate and argues that the Constitutional Treaty largely enshrines the status quo in the EU (see also *Mirror*, 28 May 2003; Roberts *Mirror*, 28 May 2003).

In addition to the assertions that the Constitutional Treaty is both necessary for the effective functioning of the EU, and that much of the content of the documents is derived from existing treaties, commentators are at pains to argue that the Constitutional Treaty reinforces the inter-governmental rather than the supra-national dimension of the EU. Indeed, they are keen to point out the extent to which the agreement wards off any advances towards a federal structure for the EU or the move towards a trans-European state warned of in the right-wing press. Will Hutton, for example, argues that (Hutton, *Observer*, 20 June, 2004):

The European Constitutional Treaty is not a blueprint for a European superstate, and the claim will not survive detailed scrutiny. On any reading, this is what right-wing historian Niall Ferguson, writing in this month's Prospect calls a Gaullist constitution – a way of formalising how the 25 member-states of the EU intend to mediate inter-governmental relations, and whose new voting structures give considerable power to the governments of the most populous countries including Britain

Similarly, Robin Cook argues that the treaty ‘delivers a hard knock to federalism and tilts the balance of power towards the member-states’ (Cook, *Guardian*, 29 October 2004; see also Roberts, *Mirror*, 27 May 2003; *Mirror*, 17 May 2003). However, there are voices in the left-wing press which argue the case for greater supra-national governance, highlighting that it is in those areas in which the Commission has the greatest authority, such as trade policy and the single market, that the EU’s greatest success stories are to be found (Clark, *Guardian*, 29 May 2007).

One concrete way in which the increased inter-governmentalism is seen, is the apparent assertion of the authority of the Council of Ministers and the European Council over the Commission. In a statement representative of the mood amongst Commission officials and the Commission president Romano Prodi, Ian Black reports that ‘[t]he European commission is to be limited to 15 members rotated equally among large and small member-states. But the commission fears the draft will weaken it, with one member complaining that Mr Giscard’s proposals would reduce the supranational executive to “a college of eunuchs”’ (Black, *Guardian*, 14

June 2003; see also White *et al*, *Guardian*, 29 May 2003; Black, *Guardian*, 30 May 2003; Cook, *Guardian*, 29 October 2004).

The focus on the balance of powers between the various supra-national institutions, and the significance this has for the balance between inter-governmentalism and supra-nationalism within the EU, stands in contrast to much of the reporting in the right-wing press. In the latter, there is a consistent failure to distinguish between the functions of different institutions and the extent to which they reinforce the power of member-states (see Chapters 4 and 5). The following passage is indicative of the inaccurate (or perhaps deliberately misinformative) reporting in the right-wing press (*Telegraph*, 24 June 2007):

The European Council, which is part of the EU, has now said that the Inter-Governmental Conference (IGC) – which represents the interests of the various nation-states that make up the EU – when it comes to debate the new treaty can only discuss items on an agenda that the Council dictates. That agenda will not include most of the constitutional reforms adopted by the European Council. So, instead of being discussed by the IGC, and possibly rejected by it, the latest reforms are now presented as a *fait accompli* that cannot be changed.

Elsewhere, Ambrose Evans Pritchard quotes Conservative MEP David Heathcoat Amory who sat as a British representative on the Convention on the Future of Europe (Evans Pritchard, *Telegraph*, 6 June 2003):

Everybody in Brussels is going to get more power. We'll have a more powerful council, a more powerful commission and a more powerful parliament, and where is this power coming from? It is coming from the nation-states and the citizens

In the passages cited above there is a clear failure to distinguish between the role the Council of the European Union (or Council of Ministers as it often referred to), the European Council and the Commission play within the complex constitutional architecture of the EU.¹¹ The impression given is that the European

¹¹ Whilst European Commissioners are nominated by member-state governments, their role is officially supranational in character: they are supposed to represent the EU as a whole and are officially forbidden from taking guidance from national governments in any area of policy. In practice, however, this *de jure* independence from national administrations is often ignored. The Council of Ministers, by contrast, is the forum in which national governments are represented and

Council, far from representing the interests of the member-states, is a supranational entity in which they are not represented. The apparent dichotomy which exists between the IGC and the European Council, therefore, gives a misleading account of the dynamics of the treaty reform process.

This is indicative of the radical separation constructed in the right-wing press between the national and supranational levels of governance. In discourse theoretical terms, this separation is facilitated by the construction of a chain of equivalence between the various supra-national institutions which comes to the fore and overshadows the differences which exist between different institutions. The dominance of the logic of equivalence over the logic of difference produces a vision of the EU as a monolithic actor which is at the same time both internally homogeneous and radically heterogeneous from the national level governance structures.

In the *Guardian*, by contrast, the logic of difference comes to the fore. The institutions of the EU are embedded in a system of differential identities in which their individual functions within the EU system become evident. That is not to say that the logic of equivalence is completely broken down: there remains a fundamental equivalence which links the institutions of the EU together, yet at the same time allows the internal differences within this system to emerge. The result is a far more nuanced treatment of the EU's architecture and the effects of the constitutional treaty on this than is evident in the right-wing press.

The conclusion to be drawn from the above analysis is that the representation of the Constitutional Treaty, like that of the EU in general is significantly more positive in the left-wing press than it is in the right-wing press. Nevertheless, it must be highlighted that the arguments made in favour of the Constitutional Treaty are still

through which they are able to contribute to the legislative procedure in different policy arenas. On agricultural issues, for example, each member-state will be represented by their agriculture minister. Similarly, the European Council is an expressly inter-governmental institution in which the interests of member-states are represented. Due to the presence of Heads of Government and State at European Council summits, this is the forum where the most strategic politically sensitive decisions are taken, including many of those taken in the current treaty reform process (for further details on the institutional structure of the EU see Nugent, 2006; Peterson and Shackleton (eds), 2006).

somewhat defensive in nature, highlighting the limited nature of the reforms proposed and reassuring readers that the vector of the EU is towards inter-governmental co-operation rather than deeper integration at the supra-national level.

It could be argued that this reflects a reticence amongst commentators to make an overtly pro-European argument, preferring to highlight the insignificance of the treaty rather than making the case for European integration. Assertions about the intergovernmental character of the treaty perhaps may also reflect the increasing tendency of national governments to attempt to assert their authority over the policies of the EU (Menon, 2008).

Where there has been a deepening of integration, such as in the extension of QMV, commentators in the left-wing press have indeed been prepared to defend the changes on the grounds that they are needed in order for the EU to continue to work effectively and deliver policy outcomes sought by citizens. As will be argued below, this conclusion would seem to be supported by the fact that both the *Guardian* editorial pieces and many prominent columnists have consistently criticised the failure of the government to adequately explain or present the arguments in favour of the EU.

In the *Guardian*, the Lisbon Treaty is defended in the same pragmatic terms as the Constitutional Treaty. For example, there is a call for the EU to move away from the inward-looking constitutional debates of the preceding years and attempt to address the practical issues such as employment and counter-terrorism, which are of greatest importance to European citizens (see Traynor, *Guardian*, 17 October 2007; *Guardian*, 17 October 2007; Wintour and Traynor, *Guardian*, 18 October 2007; White, *Guardian*, 18 October 2007).

However, in both the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* there is less debate about the substantive elements of the treaty than there is about the political implications of the treaty for the British government. The focus in the negotiations is on whether the UK government will be able to secure its 'red lines' and, in so doing, avoid the need to hold a referendum on the ratification of the treaty. Consequently, commentators are

at pains to point out the extent to which the treaty limits the power of the EU and reinforces that of national governments. They highlight also the differences between this amending treaty and the 'constitution' which it replaces (see Toynbee, *Guardian*, 16 October 2007; *Guardian*, 17 October 2007; Maguire, *Mirror*, 10 October 2007).

7.1.3 *The EU and the USA as Global Actors*

In the *Guardian*, the debate surrounding the ongoing treaty reform process is linked to debates about the relationship between the EU and the USA. The argument is presented that the role of the EU should be to act as a counterweight to the USA. In the immediate aftermath of the re-election of President George Bush in 2004, a number of articles emerged calling upon the EU to provide an alternative policy agenda to that pursued by the Bush administration in the realm of international affairs.

Simon Tisdall argues that the moment has arrived for the EU to have greater self-belief and to develop its role as an international actor (Tisdall, *Guardian*, 19 November 2004). Tisdall cites the success of the troika of the UK, Germany and France, acting on behalf of the EU, in advancing negotiations with Iran on the subject of weapons proliferation as an example of the positive role the EU can play in world affairs independently of the USA. The progress with Iran is seen as evidence of the subtler approach to international diplomacy embodied by the EU. However, Roy Greenslade questions the validity of this narrative of the EU as a force for good in the world arguing that, despite its protestations to the contrary, the EU is motivated by the same form of self-interests as the USA in the field of foreign and development policies (Greenslade *Guardian*, 23 May 2005).

The *Guardian* leader on 23 May 2005 links the ability of the EU to be a force for good in the world to the proposed Constitutional Treaty, arguing that that latter is designed to empower the EU in the field of external relations and to provide it with the governance structures – such as the creation of a full-time president of the European Council – which are necessary in order to perform the role of counterweight to the EU. This line of argument is supported by Robin Cook, who

highlights the need for unity amongst member-states if the EU is to avoid being marginalised during President Bush's second term in the way in which it was seen to be during his first (Cook, *Guardian*, 29 October 2004):

The lesson of the recent past is that when Europe is divided its views can be ignored and its values can be undermined. The left, more than anyone else, should support a constitution for a strong Europe that can offer a multilateral partnership in place of Bush's unilateralism, and our social model as an alternative to his version of feral capitalism.

It is evident from the above quotation that Cook sees a connection between the respective roles of the EU and the USA in the arena of foreign policy and the economic model each is seen to represent. The theme of the European economy is one to which we shall return later in the chapter. At this stage, it is sufficient merely to highlight the way in which this is used to underline the very different world views which the EU and the USA are seen to represent.

In part, the coverage of Bush's re-election reflects the calls by French president Jacques Chirac for a multi-polar world to challenge US hegemony and the necessity of the Constitutional Treaty in equipping the EU to play the role of counterweight to the USA (Gow, *Guardian*, 6 November 2004). Yet it raises questions not only about the role of the EU in the world, but equally about the position of the UK. Chirac's stance that the EU must counterbalance the USA, was contradicted by that of British Prime Minister Tony Blair, who reasserted the shared interests of Europe and the USA and called upon EU leaders to work positively and constructively with the newly re-elected president. The *Guardian* editorial on 16 November 2004 argues that, in so doing, Blair 'was re-stating the classic assumption of all recent governments - that Britain can continue to serve as a bridge across the Atlantic, avoiding a choice between the old and new continents' (*Guardian*, 16 November 2004). However, it continues, on many issues the British position is closer to that of other EU member-states than to that of the US: '[o]n trade, the environment, development, and the international criminal court, London is closer to Brussels, Paris and Berlin than to Washington.'

Jonathan Steele argues that the moment has arrived for the UK and the rest of the EU to chart a separate course from the USA in terms of foreign policy by disbanding NATO (Steele, *Guardian*, 8 November 2004). The latter, he argues is merely a tool with which the US government is able to control and dictate foreign policy in European capitals and should be abandoned in favour of European foreign policy structures based on a distinctive set of moral and strategic positions from those advocated by the USA.

The calls to disband NATO and for the UK to fundamentally realign its foreign policy with that of the EU stands in stark contrast to the representation of the UK's strategic interests in the right-wing press. According to the latter, the period of peace and stability in Europe is not brought about by the advent of the EU, as is claimed in the left-wing press, but was achieved by NATO (see for example Steyn, *Telegraph*, 24 May 2005; Phillips, *Mail*, 30 May 2005). Consequently, for these commentators the UK's true strategic interests have been, and continue to be, served by NATO and would be put in danger by any independent EU defence or foreign policy capability outwith the existing trans-Atlantic structures (see for example *Telegraph*, 22 November 2004; Heathcoat Amory, E, *Mail*, 21 June 2007).

In summary, the left-wing press's coverage of the EU sees it as a source of peace and stability in Europe and a potential counterweight to the USA in international affairs. This constitutes a clear departure from the position articulated within the right-wing press, which underlines instead the crucial role of NATO in guaranteeing Europe's stability and strategic interests. The preceding discussion raises some interesting questions about the position of the UK in the world and its relationship with both the USA and its partners in the EU. The following section will examine in greater detail the position which the UK is seen to occupy within the EU.

7.2 Britain and the EU

It was argued in Chapter 5 that in much of the coverage of the EU in the right-wing press, the UK is positioned outside of the EU which is constructed as a hostile, foreign power from which the UK must be defended. This section will

examine the relationship which is constructed between Britain and the EU in the titles examined here. In addition, it will scrutinise the relationship constructed between the UK and the other EU member-states. The argument presented here is that whilst the *Guardian* and the *Mirror* offer a positive view of the EU, and are broadly supportive of the UK's engagement in the process of European integration, many of the themes which emerge within the right-wing press are also evident in these titles.

7.2.1 *The Terms of the Debate*

Despite the argument presented in the previous section that the *Guardian*, and to a lesser extent the *Mirror*, attempt to champion the achievements of the EU, there is nonetheless evidence of a residual euroscepticism in the terminology employed within both newspapers. As in the right-wing press, the continuing separation of the UK from the remainder of the EU is evident at the most basic linguistic level. This manifests itself in a tendency to talk about the UK's relationship *with* 'Europe' or *with* the EU, which suggests that the UK exists outside of the latter and is, therefore, engaged in bilateral relationship with it. Kamel Ahmed, for example, comments that 'the new EU constitution would set in stone our relationship *with Europe* for the foreseeable future' (Ahmed, *Guardian*, 18 May 2003, emphasis added). Similarly, Michael White and Nicholas Watt refer to the 'the Blair government's eight-year engagement *with Europe* (White and Watt, *Guardian*, 7 June 2005, emphasis added).

The other phrase which appears with great regularity in the right-wing press refers to transfers of power *to Brussels*. Perhaps unsurprisingly references to Brussels and to transfers of power to Brussels are less frequent in the left-wing press than they are in the right-wing press, which as argued in previous chapters attempts to depict the EU as a monolithic foreign actor which can be referred to by this simple label. The term 'Brussels' is, again employed as a metonym for the EU in the same way in which London, Paris and Berlin are used to refer to Britain, France and Germany respectively (see *Guardian*, 16 November 2004; Traynor, *Guardian*, 2 June 2005; Hattersley, *Guardian*, 13 June 2005; Traynor, *Guardian*, 21 June 2007).

References to transfers of power to Brussels occur very infrequently in either the *Guardian* or the *Mirror* during the negotiation of the Constitutional Treaty and the debates leading up to the French and Dutch referendums. This terminology features mainly in direct quotations or paraphrases of Conservative Party politicians and other eurosceptic commentators (see Watt, *Guardian*, 8 June 2004; Toynbee, *Guardian*, 2 June 2004; Watt, *Guardian*, 2 June 2004; Rifkind, *Guardian*, 7 June 2004; Blackman, *Mirror*, 29 May 2003).

However, during the negotiations of the Lisbon Treaty, references to transfers of power to Brussels begin to appear more frequently in the reporting of the forthcoming agreement. Patrick Wintour, for example, informs readers that, according to sources in Downing Street ‘Britain will not hold a referendum on Europe’s future because any plans that require a sufficiently big transfer of power *to Brussels* to warrant one will never be accepted’ (Wintour, *Guardian*, 16 June 2007 emphasis added; see also Wintour, *Guardian*, 14 June 2007). In a similar vein, Simon Jenkins makes reference to ‘the notorious “passarelle” clause, enabling further national sovereignty to be transferred to Brussels without another treaty’ (Jenkins, *Guardian*, 24 October 2007). Ian Traynor reports that Prime Minister Brown ‘insists the pact entails no substantive transfers of powers from London to Brussels because he has secured a series of exemptions from the treaty that he describes as Britain’s “red lines”’ (Traynor, *Guardian*, 17 October 2007).

There are voices evident in the left-wing press, which aim to challenge the notion that the UK is somehow not a European country. Most notably, Will Hutton repeatedly attempts to address this issue in his *Observer* column. Referring to the ongoing process of European integration, Hutton comments that ‘[a]s this is our continent, too, Britain has no choice but to be part of it’ (Hutton, *Observer*, 20 June, 2004; see also Hutton, *Observer*, 5 June, 2005).

Nevertheless, the fact that the terminology highlighted above appears in articles broadly supportive of the UK’s membership of the EU reflects the deep-seated psychological division which exists between Britain and continental ‘Europe’ and which is propagated by overtly eurosceptic discourses which seek to emphasise

the essential heterogeneity of the UK from a homogenised European ‘other.’ The pervasiveness of this discourse of separation can be seen by the way in which its terminology subtly penetrates sources not pursuing an overtly eurosceptic agenda.

7.2.2 UK's Semi-Detachment from the EU

It is argued in the left-wing press that the UK remains on the periphery of the EU and has not fully reconciled itself to its position as a European country. Hugo Young, for example, argues that the decision by the government not to hold a referendum on Britain’s membership of the Euro is tantamount to a ‘declaration that we’re still not prepared to enter fully into the EU project’ (Young, *Guardian*, 1 May 2003). Elsewhere, a *Guardian* editorial refers to the UK as ‘our own semi-detached island’ (*Guardian*, 23 May 2005).

Timothy Garton-Ash argues that the attitude of both politicians and those elements of the media unwilling to accept the UK’s destiny as a European country is preventing the UK from reaping the rewards of EU membership (Garton-Ash, *Guardian*, 22 May 2003):

While the Sun and the Daily Mail rant against the proposed European constitution as if it were written by Napoleon and illustrated by Adolf Hitler; while New Labour begins to tear itself apart over Europe just as the old Conservatives did under Margaret Thatcher; while much of the political nation indulges in yet another orgy of ideological, petty, misinformed and fundamentally un-British controversy about this phantasm we call “Europe”; while, in short, Britain continues to cut off its nose to spite its face, the real Europe marches on.

Garton-Ash contrasts the position of the UK with that of Spain, which has enthusiastically embraced its status as an EU member and has benefited both economically and politically from so doing. Interestingly, he highlights the way in which much of the debate around the EU identifies the media construction of ‘Europe’ as a land apart from the UK, and contrasts this to the ‘real Europe’ of countries such as Spain, which the right-wing press fail to acknowledge.

Whilst Garton-Ash focuses on the missed opportunities of Britain's semi-detachment from the EU, Michael White expresses his concern about the potential loss of political influence within the EU, which may result from the UK's failure to engage constructively with its EU partners in the treaty reform process (White, *Guardian*, 18 June 2004). Commenting on the fact that the UK press had been situated in the Slovenian briefing room during a European Council summit in the Justus Lipsius building in Brussels, White tells us that he had been confined to 'a remote corner of the building, far from the gossip and buzz' which 'did not feel like being at the "heart of Europe", more like being in Slovenia.' According to one colleague, White continues this confinement to the periphery 'is what it will be like for Britain all the time if Europe develops in concentric circles excluding us.'

7.2.3 The EU as Inter-National Conflict

It was argued in Chapter 4 that EU politics is constructed in the right-wing press as a zero-sum game played out between competing member-states. In this section it will be argued that much of the same terminology and imagery employed within the right-wing press is evident also in the left-wing press. Gaby Hinsliff, for example, refers to 'the battles ahead' between member-states and a 'clash of wills' between Britain and France, as well as referring to the potential 'surrender' of the British veto in certain areas (Hinsliff, *Observer*, 20 June 2004 a; see also Hoggart, *Guardian*, 22 June 2004; Hardy, *Mirror*, 21 June 2003; Blackman, *Mirror*, 23 June 2007). The language of international conflict was discussed at some length in preceding chapters and so will not be rehearsed again here. Despite this terminology being prevalent in the left-wing press, its use is not as widespread or as uniform as in the right-wing press. Interestingly, as the debates shift from the Constitutional Treaty to the Lisbon treaty, there is a hardening in rhetoric of government officials which is reflected in the language and terminology of commentators in the *Guardian* throughout June and October 2007.

In some sections of the left-wing press, however, there is an attempt to challenge the notion evident in the type of language described above that the process of EU politics and treaty revision involves simply the stubborn defence of the

national interest. David Clark, for example, highlights the fact that international diplomacy involves the careful process of coalitions building, which may only bear fruit in the longer term (Clark, *Guardian*, 29 May 2007):

Successful European diplomacy involves patient alliance building and complex deals across policy areas in which support in one is secured by being flexible in others. Sometimes this means accepting decisions that in isolation fail a strict national interest test, but that contribute to a greater gain.

This point is echoed by former Europe Minister Dennis MacShane who argues that, far from being an exclusively zero-sum game, international agreements such as those concluded between member-states of the EU are often beneficial to all parties concerned. However, because of the need to represent any agreement as guaranteeing the national interests, and to placate the eurosceptic instincts of the right-wing press, it is not possible to make this argument openly. ‘Compromise and win-win concessions,’ he confesses, ‘constitute the dirty little secrets at the heart of Europe’ (MacShane, *Guardian*, 17 June 2007).

As in the right-wing media, the main rivalry within the EU is seen to be that which exists between the UK and France. Duval-Smith and her co-authors reproduce the same military metaphors to describe the conduct of EU level politics as those found in the right-wing press, implying that the European Council summit is the modern day equivalent of war between these countries (Duval-Smith *et al*, *Guardian*, 19 June 2005):

Britain and France used to resolve their differences on the battlefield, as Napoleonic fans will remind Europe this weekend when they stage their 190th-anniversary re-enactment of Waterloo. Today, their leaders trade blows in a soulless modern building a few miles to the north, where the opposing Anglo-French visions of Europe guaranteed a bruising, if slightly less bloody, confrontation.

As well as downplaying the fact that the EU is more than simply an arena for international bargaining and that through the process of integration a conception of common interests between the British and the French may develop, the description of the ‘soulless’ negotiations seems to miss the point that the greatest of the

achievement is precisely the fact that war between Britain and France is almost unthinkable and that a stable institutional framework exists to manage the relations between these states.

In the *Mirror*, the rivalry between Britain and France is also evident. James Hardy claims that Tony Blair was ‘heralded as the conqueror of Europe by the French,’ before detailing the way in which the British Prime Minister was able to outwit the French government by securing a deal which secures British interests (Hardy, *Mirror*, 20 June 2003; see also Hardy, *Mirror*, 21 June 2003; Blackman, *Mirror*, 18 June 2004; Blackman, *Mirror*, 21 June 2004).

7.2.3.1 The Fallout from the French Referendum

As in the right-wing press, the aftermath of the French referendum on the constitutional treaty was a period in which France and the UK came in to direct conflict both about the future direction of the EU, and over the way in which the EU budget ought to be funded. On the first of these issues, the British government was keen to put the Constitutional Treaty on hold for an indefinite period of time, while moving the EU’s agenda on to those issues such as economic reform and unemployment, which it argued are of more direct relevance to the everyday lives of EU citizens. The French by contrast were keen, at least initially, to salvage the Constitutional Treaty and were sceptical about the economic policies advocated by the British government as a panacea to both the EU’s economic problems and its apparent legitimacy crisis.

Michael White summarises the division which emerged between the French and the British governments over the future direction of the EU, arguing that the British government wanted the EU to move ‘away from constitution-making, towards economic reform and job creation, precisely the kind of economic liberalism which French voters and their leadership have explicitly rejected’ (White, *Guardian*, 2 June 2005; see also Henley *et al* *Guardian*, 30 May 2005; Watt and Henley, *Guardian*, 1 June 2005; Watt *et al*, *Guardian*, 3 June 2005; Wintour, *Guardian*, 17 June 2005).

Reform of the European economy is one of the principal issues over which the British and French governments disagreed in the wake of the French referendum. However, questions about free trade, competition and the role of the government in the economy form the basis of a deeper and longer-standing ideological division between the French and the British governments, which will be examined in greater detail below.

As in the right-wing press, the apparent division between France and the UK is seen to map onto a distinction between 'old' Europe and 'new' Europe under the leadership of the Franco-German alliance and the UK respectively (see Watt, *Guardian*, 30 May 2005 b; Watt, *Guardian*, 31 May 2005; Watt and Henley, *Guardian*, 1 June 2005; Watt, *Guardian*, 2 June 2005 a; Watt, *Guardian*, 2 June 2005 b; Watt *et al*, *Guardian*, 3 June 2005). Again it is economic policy which separates those in the UK and Eastern Europe from the founder members of the EU in Western Europe (Watt, *Guardian*, 30 May 2005 a):

At one end of the spectrum is a group of countries, including the UK (and Poland which favour a more diverse and economically liberal EU," the CER says. "At the other is an integrationist group led by France and Germany... that favours a high level of social protection.

Having experienced a period of great tension over the preceding two years, it is, however, evident that there is a clear change of tone in the relations between Britain and France during the final negotiations of the treaty of Lisbon in 2007, which coincided with the arrival in office of President Sarkozy (see Watt, *Guardian*, 17 June 2007). The coverage in the *Guardian* suggests that there is widespread agreement between the British and French administrations about the substantive issues at stake in the forthcoming negotiations. By contrast, the UK is seen to be at odds with Germany about issues such as the Charter of Fundamental Rights (Traynor, *Guardian*, 15 June 2007; Traynor, *Guardian*, 21 June 2007).

7.2.3.2 Reform of the EU Budget

On the issue of the EU budget, the basis of the disagreement between the UK and France was the British insistence that any reduction in the British rebate be linked to a concomitant reduction in the proportion of the EU budget devoted to agricultural subsidies, of which France was the overwhelming beneficiary. This gained widespread coverage in the left-wing press (White, *Guardian*, 23 May 2005; Hinsliff and Duval-Smith, *Observer*, 29 May 2005; Henley, *Guardian*, 30 May 2005; Watt and White, *Guardian*, 10 June 2005; Wintour and Henley, *Guardian*, 11 June 2005, *Mirror*, 20 May 2005). As in the right-wing press, the UK was seen to be in political isolation over this issue. Nicholas Watt highlights the fact that, despite the attempts by Tony Blair to place the UK at the heart of the EU ‘Britain has returned to its familiar position as the odd man out after Jacques Chirac diverted attention away from the French no vote by highlighting the “injustice” of Britain’s £3.2bn rebate’ (Watt, *Guardian*, 17 June 2005). Similarly, the *Guardian* editorial the following day informed its readers that ‘Britain was badly isolated on the budget’. ‘Most other EU states’ it continued, ‘resent the size and the continuing existence of the UK rebate, and Mr Chirac was ruthless in exploiting this to distract from his own troubles’ (*Guardian*, 18 June 2005; see also Blackman, *Mirror*, 16 June 2005).

In these examples, it is clear that the UK is not only isolated, but that the French government has been responsible for marshalling support for their own position on the EU finances, in direct opposition to that of the UK. This point is supported by Andrew Rawnsley who described how Tony Blair ‘was spitting with fury on Friday night about what he saw as an attempt by the French, aided and abetted by Luxembourg and Germany, to organise a 24-to-one gang bang of Britain’ (Rawnsley, *Observer*, 19 June 2005; see also Henley, *Guardian*, 15 June 2005; Duval-Smith *et al*, *Guardian*, 19 June 2005; Watt and Wintour, *Guardian*, 18 June 2005). Elsewhere, the apparent conflict between France and the UK over the budget and the future direction of the EU is reported in terms of the personal antipathy which is seen to exist between President Chirac and Prime Minister Tony Blair (see Henley, *Guardian*, 15 June 2005; Watt and Wintour, *Guardian*, 16 June 2005; Watt,

Guardian, 18 June 2005; Watt and Wintour, *Guardian*, 18 June 2005; *Mirror*, 10 June 2005; Blackman, *Mirror*, 18 June 2005 a and b).

7.2.4 Power and Influence in the EU

There is a concern evident within the left-wing press about the potential danger of a 'core Europe' developing to forge ahead with deeper integration if UK fails to engage positively with EU (see White, *Guardian*, 18 June 2004; Clark, *Guardian*, 2 May 2005; Kettle, *Guardian*, 24 May 2005). This is noteworthy not simply because it demonstrates the concern about the potential marginalisation of the UK within the EU, but because it also represents a departure in the use of this term between the right-wing and the left-wing press. In the former it is seen as a point of fact that a 'core' Europe, centered around the Franco-German axis, already exists and is the driving force behind the European integration process. Core Europe is seen to exclude the UK in order to run the EU for its own advantage. In the left-wing press, by contrast, the UK is seen to be the master of its own destiny and has the potential to actively engage with the EU. Only its failure to do so will result in the development of this core group of member-states frustrated at the stagnation of the EU.

Despite the contention within the left-wing press that the UK can and ought to play a leading role in the EU, the idea persists that it is France and not the UK that is at the heart of the EU. France, we are told, is 'the country which has been the driving force behind European integration since 1957' (*Guardian*, 23 May 2005). Elsewhere, France and Germany are described as EU 'heavyweights' (Black and White, *Guardian*, 17 June 2004). The apparent predominance of France and Germany within the EU is reflected by David Clark's contention that Tony Blair's European policy had been driven by the 'twin objectives of reconciling the British people to Europe and making Britain the equal of France and Germany' (Clark, *Guardian*, 2 May 2005). Alex Duval-Smith and Gaby Hinsliff, argue that France enjoys a status within the EU quite different from that of the UK (Duval-Smith and Hinsliff, *Observer*, 29 May 2005; see also Watt, *Guardian*, 30 May 2005 a; Hutton, *Observer*, 5 June 2005). The UK's significance within the EU is seen to me more

akin to that of the newer member-states from Central and Eastern Europe than that of the founder members of the EU (Duval-Smith and Hinsliff, *Observer*, 29 May 2005):

However reflective of purely national malaise it may be, a French 'no' would be hugely symbolic - far more so than a British or Polish one. It would be a 'no' from the heart of Europe, not its fringes - from the country whose Franco-German coal and steel alliance in 1950 led to the creation, seven years later, of the European Economic Community, from the country seen as the custodian the European ideal.

The idea that the EU remains under Franco-German control and that the UK is consigned to the periphery is, however, challenged elsewhere in the left-wing press. The idea of a Franco-German axis as the motor driving the European integration process forward is replaced at other times by the idea of an EU 'big three' including the UK too (see White, *Guardian*, 1 June 2004; Black and White, *Guardian*, 23 June 2004; Watt, *Guardian*, 2 June 2005 b). Similarly, a *Guardian* editorial from June 2005 calls into question the ability of France and Germany to provide the Union with the leadership it requires (*Guardian*, 18 June 2005):

Germany and France can no longer prescribe the union's future course, in part because there are now 23 other member-states to consider, but also because each has failed to deal with its own structural economic problems for a decade.

Above all the argument is made that the EU is moving in the direction advocated by the UK. For example, the *Guardian* editorial on 17 May 2003 makes precisely this point. Referring to the draft Constitutional Treaty published shortly beforehand it argues that (*Guardian*, 17 May 2003):

If Mr Giscard's interview on the Today programme yesterday is any guide at all, its scope will be modest, resistant to "federal" prescriptions, largely in line with what can loosely be called the "British" vision of Europe, and will not please the integrationists (who were vocal in their displeasure at Thursday's Brussels session).

In a similar vein, Gaby Hinsliff reports on the government's stance towards the Constitutional Treaty claiming that Prime Minister Blair will 'argue that old alliances within Europe have shifted, giving more sceptical countries such as Britain the upper hand' (Hinsliff, *Observer*, 20 June 2004 b; see also Duval-Smith and Hinsliff,

Observer, 29 May 2005; *Guardian*, 6 June 2005; Kettle, *Guardian*, 16 June 2007; Toynbee, *Guardian*, 16 October 2007).

Thus, a somewhat mixed picture emerges from the left-wing press about the position of the UK in the EU. On the one hand, it is argued that the UK has still not fully reconciled itself to its destiny as a European country and that it suffers both economically and politically from its semi-detachment from the EU. A second line of argument mirrors the coverage in the right-wing press in placing France and Germany at the heart of the EU, wielding more power and influence within the Union than the UK. Elsewhere, however, it is argued that the UK's power within the EU is growing as part of the EU's 'big three' member-states and that the direction in which the EU is moving is that advocated by the British government. Crucially, the coverage in the left-wing press challenges the assumption in the right-wing press that European integration in any form is a threat which must be resisted, and presents the argument that a positive engagement with the EU can bring concrete economic benefits to the UK as well as increased political influence.

7.2.5 Logic of Difference

In the preceding sections it was argued that the UK is seen to be in direct conflict with France over the fallout from the French referendum defeat and the negotiations over the EU budget, which were seen to be representative of a more general ideological division between 'old' Europe and 'new' Europe. This broadly reproduces the coverage found in the right-wing press which emphasises the division between the UK on the one hand, and the remainder of the EU on the other, in which the latter is constructed as an internally homogenous entity. In discourse theoretical terms this involves the construction of an antagonistic frontier between the identity positions 'Britain' and 'Europe' and the construction of a chain of equivalence which unites the continental European states together in terms of their opposition to the UK.

In the left-wing press, however, the reporting of the events in question is much less uniform. Whilst certain elements of the left-wing press depict the UK being in political isolation, facing a hostile Franco-German led coalition of member-

states, there is also an attempt to produce a more nuanced account of politics of European council summits and the shifting alliances of member-states that these produce in various issues. On the issue of the budget negotiations, for example, we are told that Blair 'was mightily relieved when the opposition of the Dutch, the Swedes and others to Europe's spending plans meant that Britain was not compelled to wield the veto' (Rawnsley, *Observer*, 19 June 2005). Elsewhere there is evidence of the UK being in coalition with variety of other member-states and an attempt by commentators to represent the different positions of other member-states on the issues of greatest importance to the negotiations (Watt and White, *Guardian*, 10 June 2005; Wintour and Henley, *Guardian*, 11 June 2005; Watt and Harding, *Guardian*, 13 June 2005; Henley *et al*, *Guardian*, 15 June 2005; Wintour *et al*, *Guardian*, 17 June 2005; *Guardian*, 18 June 2005; Duval-Smith *et al*, *Guardian*, 19 June 2005).

At certain points, the UK is even seen to be in the same bloc as France and Germany, defending a common position against that of other member-states. Michael White, for example, highlights the fact that whilst the UK, France and Germany may be at odds over how EU funds ought to be spent, they are in agreement over the overall size of the EU budget (White, *Guardian*, 23 May 2005):

Britain and five other states - including France, Germany and Poland - want it cut back to 1%, thus making payments by member-states "significantly less."

The potential for future alliances between the UK and Germany is also mooted by Harding and Watt who report the sympathy of German opposition leader Angela Merkel with the British position on the EU budget (Harding and Watt, *Guardian*, 14 June 2005; see also Watt, *Guardian*, 18 June 2005; Gilfeather, *Mirror*, 12 June 2005).

In addition, the coverage of the debates about the Constitutional Treaty details the cleavage which emerges on the question of institutional reform is between the larger and smaller member-states: '[s]mall countries like Austria and Finland and most of the 10 new members are opposed to plans to scale down the now 25-strong commission' (Black and White, *Guardian*, 17 June 2004; see also Black, *Guardian*,

28 May 2003; White *et al*, *Guardian*, 29 May 2003; Black, *Guardian*, 30 May 2003; White, *Guardian*, 31 May 2003; Black, *Guardian*, 14 June 2003).

It can be argued, therefore, that the antagonistic frontiers and the chains of equivalence which emerge in the right-wing press are – in certain sections of the reporting in the left-wing press – broken down and replaced by a logic of difference, which links together all the EU member-states in a single system of relational identities. The result is a more subtle and nuanced picture of the interests and self-conceptions of state actors as opposed to the impression created in much of the right-wing press that on many issues EU member-states have a common agenda based solely on the fact that they are not the UK.

In summary, the relationship constructed in the left-wing press between the UK and its fellow EU member-states reproduces certain elements of the eurosceptic discourses examined in the previous chapter. As in the right-wing press, the picture which emerges in the titles examined here is of a country still not fully reconciled with its position as a member of the EU. This manifests itself both in the terminology employed by media commentators and the defensive, and often confrontational, rhetoric of government ministers. The latter appear to approach the EU as a necessary evil from whose most damaging effects the UK must be defended. The fact that certain commentators continue to talk about Britain's relationship *with* the EU and the reluctance of government ministers to make a positive case for Britain's engagement with the EU are indicative of the UK's semi-detachment from the EU. Consequently, the UK finds itself in a form of self-imposed marginalisation in which it fails to grasp the potential benefits the EU can provide.

As in the right-wing press, the EU is often depicted as a forum for international bargaining. The rivalry between the UK and France (supported by its ally Germany) is again evident not least in the ideological and political differences which emerge between these states in the aftermath of the French referendum in May 2005. Where the titles examined here deviate from the right-wing press, however, is in their more subtle and nuanced treatment of the different alliances which are formed between member-states on certain issues. This challenges the eurosceptic

depiction of the EU as a conspiracy against the British. Despite the acknowledgement that France and Germany are powerful members of the EU, the picture emerges not of a Union run by France and Germany at the UK's expense, but rather of the EU as a collection of member-states with unique sets of interests. In this context the UK is positioned not as an outsider in the EU, but as one member-state among many.

7.3 The European Economy

One of the principal themes of the eurosceptic discourse is the apparent superiority of the British economy over the 'European' economic model, and the need for the UK to lead the remainder of the EU out of the economic doldrums in which it finds itself. Whilst in the *Mirror*, economic issues receive relatively little attention, in the *Guardian* and the *Observer* a more balanced view of the European economy emerges.

There is still significant attention given to the apparent success of the UK economy compared to those of other EU member-states and the Eurozone collectively. The claim is also made that, since the UK has enjoyed higher levels of growth and lower levels of unemployment than the Eurozone, the British case provides a successful model which others in the EU ought to emulate. However, other voices challenge the idea of British economic superiority and cite ways in which the 'European' economies have outperformed that of the UK. A third strand of opinion which emerges challenges that idea that the UK economy is radically different from those of continental Europe, claiming that the former is in fact far closer in structure to the latter than it is to the USA.

7.3.1 The Problems of European Economy

Much of the commentary in the left-wing press highlights the apparently poor economic performance of other EU member-states in comparison with the UK. It is argued that economic reform is both necessary and unavoidable for countries such as France and Germany and that the UK provides a model of a modern, liberal economy

which these countries ought to emulate. In addition, these same articles criticise the inability or the unwillingness of these countries to embrace the realities of the modern world and to undertake the reforms needed. In this sense, the left-wing press mirror the coverage of the right-wing press.

Martin Kettle examines in some detail the economic challenges faced by Germany, and draws an explicit comparison between it and the UK. Kettle argues that Germany is a 'different kind of country' to the UK, and whilst its political stability, high standards of environmental protection and public services are to be envied, these come at a high price in terms of unemployment (Kettle, *Guardian*, 24 May 2005).

The problems of the German economy are seen to emanate not from reunification, but from a failure to adapt to the new economic realities which emerged from the end of communism in Eastern Europe and the economic awakening of China. The problems faced by the German economy are the same as those faced by France and other members of the EU. In this sense, the German economy functions as a microcosm of 'Europe' more generally. Again, Kettle argues, the contrast with Britain is clear (Kettle, *Guardian*, 24 May 2005):

It is a world in which Britain, because of the premature destruction of its own post-1945 settlement, is better equipped to make the transition to the market-economy-dominated 21st century than the older nations of the European Union. Now it is the turn of Germany, struggling to reform but highly educated and highly skilled - the key assets for any developed economy in this changing global economy - to go through its own version of that painful transition.

Despite the apparently unassailable case for economic reform, Kettle accuses both the governments and the people of 'old' Europe of being either unwilling or unable to embrace the manifold realities of the modern world. Both the political elites and those they govern are afraid of the unknown (Kettle, *Guardian*, 3 June 2005):

Many in Europe have not yet woken up to the changed, challenging but better world created by the end of the cold war. This goes for Western Europe's

politicians as well as its voters. On Europe's left and the right, there is a yearning for a politics that will make the perceived problems of the post-cold war era - market forces for some, black people for others - go away. Some of Europe's politicians occasionally imply that bits of this might be possible. But it is not.

Elsewhere, Kettle is even more damning about the French voters who rejected the Constitutional Treaty on the grounds that they fear the economic changes and the new political realities it is seen to enshrine (Kettle, *Guardian*, 31 May 2005):

Whatever their motives, this was a vote to keep tight hold of nurse for fear of finding something worse. It was the politics of Peter Pan, of not wanting to grow up.

The response by politicians to this vote, Kettle fears, will be 'to pull up the draw-bridge' and to try and protect France and its social model from the inexorable march of globalisation and the twin threats of competition and migration which it is seen to bring (see also Fessaguet, *Observer*, 31 May 2005).

The problems of the 'European' economy function in Kettle's argument as the 'other,' against which the UK's success is brought into relief. The implication is that whilst those in some EU member-states are living in the past, the UK has adapted successfully to the modern world and is prepared to face the challenges it presents. Britain embodies not only a successful economic model, but a completely different world view from the remainder of the EU. However, Kettle is keen to warn against 'British or Blairite triumphalism' in the wake of the French 'no' vote, and argues that the British – in terms of social justice and public services – have much to learn from the French (Kettle, *Guardian*, 31 May 2005). Nevertheless, it is assumed in this article that Britain is a modern economy which has adapted to the realities of the modern world and that France must undergo the same process of change and adaptation which the UK underwent in the past (see also Kettle, 24 May 2005).

Like Kettle, Larry Elliott sees the economic problems of France and Germany as being typical of 'Europe' more generally and cites an OECD report on the Eurozone economy as evidence of the urgent need for reform (Elliott, *Guardian*, 25 May 2005). Ashley Seager uses the same OECD report as the basis for his article in

which he draws a direct comparison between the unemployment and growth rates in France and Britain (Seager, *Guardian*, 25 May 2005). Seager reports widespread pessimism about French economic decline and calls in the French media for ‘the British miracle’ to form the basis for economic reforms in France (see also Seager and White, *Guardian*, 17 May 2005; Seager, *Guardian*, 31 May 2005; Freedland, *Guardian*, 1 June 2005; Mandelson, *Observer*, 5 June 2005; Hutton, *Observer*, 5 June 2005; *Guardian*, 18 June 2005; Rawnsley, *Observer*, 19 June 2005; Duval-Smith *et al*, *Guardian*, 19 June 2005).

7.3.2 UK as Leader of Economic Reform

Given the reportedly poor performance of the continental European economies in comparison with that of the UK, there are calls from some commentators for the UK to chart the course for economic modernisation for the rest of the EU. This opinion is expressed by Hugo Young who argues that the British must overcome the obstacles posed by the French and Germans and lobby for economic reform in the EU (Young, *Guardian*, 20 May 2003):

The time is ripe for a heavy push towards economic reform in the EU, and Britain is perfectly positioned to be its prophet and leader. The major enemies are French protectionism and German labour-market rigidity, which defy the inexorable laws of globalisation and sooner or later will have to be unpicked.

Similarly, Jonathan Freedland argues that ‘[w]ith the EU hankering for leadership, Blair can step in and provide it’ (Freedland, *Guardian*, 1 June 2005). The focus of the reforms needed are mainly economic in nature. Freedland continues that Blair will ‘argue for the economic liberalisation he believes is vital for regeneration. He would tell voters in France and Germany that a social model that leaves 10% unemployed is an antisocial model’ (Freedland, *Guardian*, 1 June 2005; see also Mandelson, *Observer*, 5 June 2005; Henley, *Guardian*, 9 June 2005; MacShane, *Guardian*, 17 June 2007). The *Guardian* leader on 18 June 2005 appears to agree with the views expressed by its columnist, arguing that (*Guardian*, 18 June 2005):

in spite of isolation on the rebate, a real opportunity is emerging for consensus and progress on EU economic and social reform. Mr Blair is well placed to shape that debate, first as holder of the presidency and, second, as

the re-elected leader of the only large EU nation whose economy is thriving and which is increasing spending on social welfare

Despite the body of opinion in the articles cited above that Tony Blair ought to lead the way on economic reform in the EU there is concern that he may lack the political support to be able to push his reform agenda through (Kettle, *Guardian*, 14 June 2005):

Post-Iraq, Blair has far less credibility as Europe's saviour than the current British tendency to talk him up implies. That he has so many of the right prescriptions for Europe but that he now lacks the authority to secure them is his self-inflicted tragedy

Interestingly, despite the concern that Blair may lack credibility amongst fellow leaders and EU citizens in the aftermath of the UK's policy over Iraq, Kettle remains convinced that the policy agenda advocated by the British government in the economic sphere is nevertheless the right one.

Kettle's certainty that the British way is indeed the right way is reflected by senior government ministers and by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Gordon Brown, in particular. Hugo Young comments for instance that Brown is 'mesmerised [...] by the incontestable rightness of the British economic model' (Young, *Guardian*, 20 May 2003; see also Glover and Milner *Guardian*, 10 June 2003; Wintour and Black, *Guardian*, 22 June 2004; Seager and White, *Guardian*, 17 May 2005; Wintour, *Guardian*, 20 May 2005). As Brown himself comments (Elliott and Watt, *Guardian*, 29 May 2003):

We will win the economic debate in favour of a Europe which is outward looking, not inward looking; where there is mutual recognition of standards rather than a one size fits all policy towards regulation, and where there is an inter-governmental rather than federal approach to the stability and growth pact.

7.3.3 UK as a 'Third Way' Between Europe and USA

Despite the efforts of some commentators and politicians to distinguish the British economic model from that of continental Europe, many commentators see a far closer resemblance between the British and 'European' socio-economic models

than is often claimed. Will Hutton, for example, claims that (Hutton *Observer*, 5 June 2005):

Britain is a European country whose electorate has voted in three general elections for social Britain - first cousin of social Europe - and which New Labour is building while not acknowledging what it is doing. Blairism is a quintessential European-style bargain, marrying a commitment to social justice with open markets and competition, but it is not understood in those terms either at home or in Europe.

Roy Hattersley concurs that the type of continental-European social model, often demonised in the right-wing press as a form of state-socialism, is actually not too dissimilar from the type of policies pursued in the UK and which have remained immensely popular with British voters (Hattersley, *Guardian*, 13 June 2005; see also *Guardian*, 6 June 2005; Kettle, *Guardian*, 14 June 2005).

In contrast to both the continental European economies on the one hand, and the US economy on the other, the UK represents a 'third way' in the eyes of some commentators and politicians, combining the most positive elements of model (Young, *Guardian*, 20 May 2003):

Britain, Brown thinks, is the exemplar, with an American attitude to job creation and a European philosophy of social protection. Britain can lead the way towards economic practices that break the old EU out of its inward-looking box'

This view is shared by Michael White who claims that 'the social model which has emerged in Britain since 1997 and combines American economic dynamism with a Scandinavian commitment to social equality' (White, *Guardian*, 7 June 2005). This analysis, White continues, contradicts the claims that Britain is attempting to replace the European welfare model with something akin to the American model. Thus Whilst some commentators are keen to stress the apparent superiority of the British economic model, others are keen to play down the differences that exist between the UK and its European partners and to confront that idea that British calls for reform of the European economy are an attempt to impose American style neo-liberal policies on the EU.

7.3.4 Challenges to the Idea of European Economic Failure

It was argued above that in much coverage of the European economy the UK was seen to be more successful than other major European economies and that the former offers a model of economic reform for the latter to follow. This mirrors the construction of the European economy in the eurosceptic discourse. In this section it will be argued that this position does not represent the uniform opinion of commentators in the titles examined in this chapter. As is the case in other areas, there is a far greater diversity of opinion in the left-wing press than in the right-wing press, with many commentators defending the achievements of the 'European' economic so widely criticised elsewhere versus that of the UK.

Ashley Seager, for example, argues that despite the higher level of growth in the UK in recent years, French productivity levels are in fact far higher than those in the UK (Seager, *Guardian*, 25 May 2005). Similarly, Chris Huhne is keen to point out the greater wealth of countries such as France and Germany compared to the UK and the higher levels of social cohesion which are associated with the continental European economic model (Huhne, *Guardian*, 30 May 2003). He dismissed the idea that the UK should avoid deeper economic integration with 'a failing Germany or an over-regulated France' as nonsense given the fact that 'both are so much richer and more inclusive societies than ours'.

In a similar vein, Will Hutton, argues that to 'regard Europe as an economic virus from which Britain must keep its distance is another argument that doesn't stand up' (Hutton, *Observer*, 20 June, 2004). 'Sceptics like to write off Europe as an economic basket-case,' Hutton continues, 'but reality will out.' He cites evidence from leading economists that the level and growth of productivity in Europe is roughly equal to that of the US. Moreover, if Germany (facing the particular challenges resulting from reunification) is excluded with its very particular problems, the growth in employment in Europe and the USA has been almost identical (see also Clark, *Guardian*, 2 May 2005; Keegan, *Observer*, 27 June 2004; Simpson and Woodley, *Guardian*, 30 June 2004; Kettle, *Guardian*, 31 May 2005; Kettle, *Guardian*, 16 June 2007).

As well as challenging the notion of British economic superiority, there are a number of voices which take issue with what they perceive as the boastfulness of the British government in lording their apparent success over their European partners. As was highlighted above, Martin Kettle (*Guardian*, 31 May 2005) warns against what he perceives as the ‘triumphalism’ of the British government over what it claims is its superior economic performance. Similarly, the *Guardian* editorial from 7 June 2005 advises that ‘Britain would also be wise to keep its economic advice to itself for a while, and not only because our economic achievements are less substantial than is often claimed’ (*Guardian*, 7 June 2005; see also White, *Guardian*, 23 May 2005; White, *Guardian*, 2 June 2005; Rawnsley, *Observer*, 19 June 2005). The view of the media commentators is shared by former Europe Minister Dennis MacShane who argues that ‘Britain’s Europe policy will need a step change to move away from the defensive-boastful language of red line, vetoes, (and claiming) Britain is way ahead of the rest of Europe’ (Wintour, *Guardian*, 20 May 2005).

In summary, the coverage of the economy in the left-wing press reproduces certain elements of the right-wing discourse analysed in Chapter 6. Some commentators cite higher growth rates and lower unemployment rates as evidence of the superiority of the British economic model over the ‘European’ economic model, a point which is made also by the British government and Gordon Brown in particular. Other commentators, meanwhile, challenge the notion that the economies of continental Europe are basket cases in the way that is claimed in the right-wing press and play down the alleged achievements of the UK economy. A third group argue that the socio-economic model of the UK is actually closer to that of continental Europe than many would care to admit, and call on the government to be less bombastic in trumpeting its apparent successes. The result is a far more balanced depiction of the European economy than that which emerges in the right-wing press, which aims to break down the construction of the UK as uniquely different from the rest of the EU.

7.4 The Hegemony of the Eurosceptic Discourse

The first three sections of this chapter looked at the construction of the EU and the UK within what is broadly termed the left-wing press. In the current section, I will examine the relationship which exists between the coverage of the EU in the left-wing and the right-wing press. More precisely, I argue that the eurosceptic discourse evident within the right-wing press manifests itself in a number of ways in the titles examined in this chapter. Firstly, despite the generally pro-EU outlook of these newspapers, they give space to dissenting voices critical of the EU to a far greater extent than pro-EU voices are allowed a forum in the right-wing press.¹² Secondly, pro-EU commentators in the left-wing press devote a great deal of attention to the coverage of the EU in the right-wing press. The fact that articles in the left-wing press position themselves in opposition to the eurosceptic discourse is evidence of the position of dominance achieved by the latter. Finally, the hegemony of the eurosceptic discourse is evident not only in the left-wing press, but in the language employed by government officials, whose defensive and confrontational tone mirrors much of the coverage in the right-wing press. This presence of the eurosceptic discourse in the left-wing press, it is argued, reflects the hegemony achieved by this discourse in British debates surrounding the EU.

7.4.1 Eurosceptic Voices

Within the left-wing press there are certain commentators who voice overtly eurosceptic opinions, similar in tone and content to those found in the right-wing press. In the *Guardian*, Simon Jenkins voices a number of concerns about the structure of the EU, but declares himself in favour of the UK's continued membership of the EU (Jenkins, 24 October 2007). In this sense it is perhaps not completely accurate to label Jenkins a eurosceptic. Nevertheless, the language he employs to describe and discuss the EU bears a striking resemblance to that employed by those in the right-wing press. In the article cited above, for example,

¹² Of all the articles collected from the right-wing press in the context of this study, only one by Hans-Gert Pottering, President of the European Parliament could be described as overtly pro-EU (see Pottering, *Telegraph*, 19 October 2007).

Jenkins makes reference to ‘euro-fundamentalists,’ the ‘Brussels steamroller’ and ‘the rapid self-aggrandisement of the EU bureaucracy. Whilst arguing that the opt-outs secured by the government will not stand up before the ECJ, Jenkins argues that the proposed constitutional treaty is moving the EU in the direction of the ‘super-state’ first conceived of by Jacques Delors in the 1980s. The attempt to revive the Constitutional Treaty in a new reform treaty without holding a referendum on it is described also ‘as the classic path to dictatorship.’

Jenkins’ article has at heart a serious point about the lines of democratic accountability in the EU and the weakness of the British government’s case that sufficient differences exist between the Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon Treaty to mean a referendum is not required in order to ratify the latter. What is revealing is not the argument but the language in which it is made and the resort to hyperbole and exaggeration usually found in the more extreme elements of the eurosceptic press. Commentary of this kind stands out all the more because it is otherwise largely absent from the *Guardian’s* coverage of the EU.

In the *Mirror*, Tony Parson’s columns on the EU treaty reform process are equally noteworthy, both because of the similarities they share with the right-wing press and the fact that they run counter to the editorial line of the newspaper. Like Jenkins and numerous commentators in the right-wing press, Parsons is convinced that ‘they want to turn the European Union into a state’ (Parsons, *Mirror*, 19 May 2003, capitals in original). In case it is not clear who ‘they’ are, Parsons continues:

British independence would be over. Sovereignty would be deferred to an unelected official who probably can't even speak English. Certainly the interests of the British people would not be paramount in their minds.

Parson’s sceptical rhetoric is evident throughout the articles he published during the period examined here (see Parsons, *Mirror*, 18 October 2004; Parsons, *Mirror*, 27 June 2005; Parsons, *Mirror*, 15 October 2007; Parsons, *Mirror*, 22 October 2007). Parsons repeats many of the concerns about the EU articulated elsewhere in the left-wing press. The articles cited above mirror, for example, Simon Jenkins concerns about the decision of the British government not to hold a referendum on the Lisbon

Treaty. However, the terminology Parsons employs, and the underlying assumptions on which his arguments are based, reflect the positions articulated by the shrillest critics of the EU in the eurosceptic press.

Parson's views on the EU reflect those of Paul Starling who criticises the faceless bureaucrats who are attempting to gain control over UK economic policy by stealth in order to create a 'Government of Europe' (Starling, *Mirror*, 23 May 2003). Like Parsons, the tone of Starling's article reproduces the exaggeration and shrillness more typical of the coverage of the EU in the *Mail* than *Mirror*. Starling's interventions on the subject of the EU are, however, limited to this single article.

The point to take from this is that, whilst much of the commentary in the *Mirror*, as well as in the *Guardian* and the *Observer*, is broadly sympathetic to the EU, there remain dissenting voices which reproduce both the substance and the tone of the coverage of the EU in the right-wing press. The penetration of euroscepticism into those titles broadly supportive of the EU is evidence of the dominant position of eurosceptic discourses in the British print media, and the hegemonic position they occupy within British debates more generally.

The predominance of the eurosceptic discourse in debates surrounding the EU is evident not only in the reproduction of overtly eurosceptic positions within the left-wing press. It is evident also in the extent to which pro-EU commentators position their views in relation to it. There are constant references by commentators in the left-wing press to the coverage of the EU by their counterparts at the *Telegraph*, the *Sun* and the *Mail*. Those in the *Guardian* take issue with the representation of the EU within the right-wing press, and the perceived influence of these titles on both public opinion and government policy (see for example Wintour, *Guardian*, 19 May 2003; Toynbee, *Guardian*, 21 May 2003; White, *Guardian*, 7 June 2003; Kettle, *Guardian*, 16 June 2007). In the *Mirror* too there are frequent references to what is seen the hysteria and scaremongering of the right-wing press (*Mirror*, 29 May 2003; see also Blackman, *Mirror*, 29 May 2003; *Mirror*, 21 June 2004).

The eurosceptic discourse, therefore, dictates the terrain on which debates about the EU are conducted. It is the default position against which other accounts of the European integration process must position themselves. Those advocating a positive engagement with the EU must first counter the claims of the eurosceptic discourse, before being able to present their own arguments. However, in reproducing elements of the eurosceptic discourse, and in positioning themselves in direct opposition to them, commentators in the left-wing press simply serve to reinforce the predominance of the hegemonic discourse.

7.4.2 Government Discourse

Further evidence of the hegemony of the eurosceptic discourse is found in the public declarations of the British government on the subject of the EU. The UK government's approach to the EU is overwhelmingly negative and defensive, depicting the EU not as a mechanism through which the UK manages its relations with other member-states to further their collective interests, but as a threat from which the UK must be protected. This rhetoric, which mirrors the construction of the EU in the eurosceptic discourse, presents the government as the defender of the national interest, protecting the British people from the spectre of the EU.

In terms which could have been taken directly from the pages of the *Telegraph* or the *Mail*, we are told that 'Tony Blair yesterday struck a sceptical note ahead of this week's negotiations on the proposed European constitution, warning that he would not accept anything that interfered with Britain's right to set its own labour laws' (Wintour, *Guardian*, 16 June 2004). According to the *Observer*, Foreign Secretary Jack Straw's argues that 'the constitution itself guarantees our national sovereignty' (Bright, *Observer*, 13 June 2004), while the Chancellor, Gordon Brown, is at pains to point out that he would be prepared to use the UK's veto in the ongoing negotiations over the budget in order to secure a deal in the UK's interest (White, *Guardian*, 23 May 2005). The threat to use the veto in treaty reform negotiations comes against a background of debate in which the government claims to be protecting its 'red line' from attack by other member-states. For further examples of negative and defensive rhetoric see *Guardian*, 11 June 2007; Branigan, *Guardian*, 9

October 2007; Hardy, *Mirror*, 16 May 2003; *Mirror*, 19 June 2007; Prince, *Mirror*, 25 June 2007).

On becoming Prime Minister, Gordon Brown is keen to cultivate an image as a eurosceptic because he feels this will be of political benefit in the domestic arena, particularly in terms of the response it will generate from the right-wing press (Clark, *Guardian*, 29 May 2007; see also *Guardian*, 11 June 2007). Elsewhere, Brown and other senior government figures aim to present a minimalist account of the EU in which they play down its significance rather than explaining the ways in which an efficiently functioning EU is able to produce the policy outcomes voters want. Brown, for example, is keen to point out that he advocates an intergovernmental conception of the EU, arguing that a 'Europe of self-governing states working together for common purposes is in Britain's interests' (Hutton, *Observer*, 20 June 2004). In a similar vein, we learn that the Prime Minister 'described the proposed new constitution as a good idea, for technocratic reasons, in a Europe of 25 states, but offered little wider enthusiasm for the project' (Wintour, *Guardian*, 16 June 2004; see also Hardy, *Mirror*, 16 May 2003).

It should be highlighted at this point that the quotes attributed to both government ministers and officials in the left-wing press are often identical to those which feature in the right-wing press, emanating as they do from the same briefings and press conferences. However, the defensive and confrontational tone of official declarations stands in stark relief against the more sympathetic and nuanced coverage of the EU in the left-wing press. This highlights not only the extent to which government discourse is framed in terms similar to that in the right-wing press, but reflects also the penetration of eurosceptic discourse into titles broadly supportive of the EU.

It is argued in the *Guardian* that the government's antagonistic rhetoric reflects the extent to which the latter is beholden to the eurosceptic agenda pursued in right-wing press. It is suggested, for example, that Prime Minister Tony Blair only agreed to hold a referendum on the Constitutional Treaty for fear that the *Sun* newspaper would change its allegiance from Labour to the Conservatives (Kettle

Guardian, 14 June 2005; see also Keegan, *Observer*, 27 June 2004; Kettle, 16 June 2007). In a similar vein, Polly Toynbee claims that the decision not to pursue the adoption of the Euro by holding a referendum on the subject in 2003 is attributable to the pervasive influence of the right-wing press which campaigned consistently against it (Toynbee, *Guardian*, 21 May 2003; see also Young *Guardian*, 1 May 2003).

It is beyond the remit of this study to attempt either to confirm or refute the claims that specific policy decisions were dictated by the eurosceptic press. However, what is evident is the extent to which the language of government ministers reflects the construction of the EU in the eurosceptic discourse. This may be the result of a conscious decision by ministers to appeal to the editors of eurosceptic newspapers or to what they perceive as a eurosceptic public. On the other hand, it may be the result of a more subtle, subconscious process of socialisation, which reflects the extent to which the eurosceptic discourse informs the most basic assumptions on which the debates surrounding the EU are grounded, and the terms in which they are conducted. In either case, it is further evidence of the hegemony of eurosceptic discourse within British debates on the EU.

7.5 Concluding Remarks

This chapter summarises the construction of the EU in the left-wing press and the construction of the EU and the UK within these titles. The first point to highlight is that whilst there is a clearly identifiable right-wing discourse on Britain and the EU, the left-wing press is characterised by a plurality of voices offering different analyses of the issues at hand. This is particularly obvious in the case of the economy, in which a number of competing arguments are evident. Consequently, it is not possible to talk about a clearly identifiable pro-EU discourse in the left-wing press in the same way in which it is possible to talk about a eurosceptic discourse in the right-wing. However, many voices present within the left-wing press do challenge many of the anti-EU arguments made in the right-wing press. Indeed, much of the coverage in the former makes direct references to the latter and sets itself in direct opposition to it.

In addition, there are certain themes which are very prominent in the right-wing press but which are largely absent from the left-wing press. Most obviously, the notion of the EU as a foreign, imperial or colonial power is entirely absent from the coverage in the left-wing press, with no references being found to these terms. Similarly, the construction of the EU as a unitary, internally homogeneous actor on which these constructions depend, is also absent in the left-wing press. Some references are made to 'Brussels' but a far greater attempt is made to distinguish between the interests of individual member-states and the functions of different institutions. The depiction of the ECJ and the Commission attempting to force integration on the UK at the behest of a hostile Franco-German alliance is also absent here.

However, other aspects of the eurosceptic discourse are evident in the left-wing press too. For example, the vocabulary used to describe and discuss the conduct of EU-level politics often mirrors that of the eurosceptic discourse. Furthermore, the depiction of the EU as international conflict constructs an image similar to that found in the right-wing press. The image of the EU as a forum for international competition is further reinforced by the defensive and confrontational language of government ministers.

The overlap between the left- and right-wing press and the fact that commentators in the left-wing press are at such pains to challenge the construction of the EU in the right-wing press are evidence of the extent to which the parameters of the debate about the EU in the UK follow a broadly eurosceptic agenda. Whilst certain commentators seek to challenge the negative constructions of the EU analysed above, they are nevertheless forced to do this in terms dictated by the eurosceptics themselves. Agreements must be defended in terms of the national interest narrowly conceived, or on the grounds that they change little and merely reinforce the status-quo. Whilst the pro-European voices in the media may offer a reasonable defence against the more outlandish claims made by those in the eurosceptic press, and may produce some counter-attacks of their own, the game itself is played on the eurosceptics' home ground.

8. Conclusion

The present study is motivated by a desire to better understand the origin and the structure of British attitudes towards the EU. Why is it that British citizens have expressed such consistently low levels of support for the European integration process and for Britain's full participation in the latter? Is there something about the experience of living (or growing up) in the UK which inclines individuals to view the EU with scepticism and to define their identities in purely national terms? It was inspired also by the apparent inability of existing studies to explain this phenomenon completely.

It is argued in the existing literature that public opinion towards the EU is associated with exclusively national identity constructions. The principal contribution of this thesis, therefore, is to supplement the existing scholarship in the field by examining the process of political identity formation in the UK from a post-structuralist perspective. By investigating this question from a different theoretical starting point from the existing literature it was possible to both supplement and move beyond its findings, and to address the perceived weaknesses it contains.

The present study also represents an advance on those studies which attempt to explain public opinion towards the EU in terms of an essentialist reading of national history. Rather than accepting history as an unproblematic explanatory variable, DT sees historical narratives as incomplete and contestable articulations of the national past, which serve the aims of specific political interests. This project, therefore, examines the construction of Britain's past within specific discourses of the nation, and demonstrates how these are invoked to buttress claims about Britain's position in the world and its relationship with the EU.

A second aim of this thesis was to contribute to ongoing debates within the field of post-structuralist discourse theory about the potential application of discourse theory to new areas of study and to new types of research question. By moving discourse theory firmly onto the terrain of mainstream social science, this study

aimed to expand the potential horizons of discourse theory and to investigate the methodological implications of this move. Furthermore, in deploying discourse theory in a new and innovative way, this thesis provides a conceptual toolkit which can be deployed for the study of related questions in different contexts. By pushing the boundaries of the existing body of scholarship in the field of DT, it is hoped additional avenues for research may be opened up for scholars interested in the issue of euroscepticism or in other areas in which this approach may supplement or move beyond the achievements of existing research programmes.

In the sections below I examine the contribution which this study has made in each of these areas and outline the potential for additional research opened up by its findings. As with any research project, certain choices had to be made in terms of the focus of the study. Some issues, therefore, were excluded from the thesis, or could not be fully expanded upon. In highlighting these areas the intention is to position the study not only with regard to the existing literature out of which it arose, but the subsequent studies to which it may give rise.

8.1 Understanding British Attitudes to the EU

As stated above, the principal aim of this study was to contribute towards understanding the consistently low levels of support expressed by British citizens towards the EU (Eurobarometer, 2007). This study positions itself, therefore, in relation to an extensive literature on public opinion towards the EU, and on British attitudes towards the EU more specifically. Recent studies have focused on political identities as key determinants of levels of support for the European integration process (see Hooghe and Marks, 2005). Those citizens who defined their identity in exclusively national terms tended also to oppose the expansion of the European integration process and their country's participation within this (Hooghe and Marks, 2009). However, these studies are unable to account for the prevalence of the exclusively national identity constructions associated with low levels of support for the EU in some member-states such as the UK.

The contribution of this thesis is to respond to the gap which exists in the current literature, by accounting for the prevalence of exclusively national identity constructions and the associated low levels of support for the EU in the British context. It develops a theory of political subjectivity which is able to precisely that. I draw on post-structuralist DT to develop an account of the subject firmly grounded in the discursive environment in which it emerges. Consequently, it is able to account for political identities at the societal rather than individual level. The discourse theoretical concepts of the subject position, political subjectivity and the logics of equivalence and difference are able to account for the shape and structure of political identities, whilst the Lacanian concept of fantasy is able to account for both the strength and the longevity of these identity constructions.

The importance of the present study is that it places the question of British euroscepticism in the context of broader discourses about Britain and its relationship to Continental Europe and the EU. It is impossible to understand public opinion towards the EU in isolation from the discursive environment in which it is debated; political identities emerge within specific discursive contexts. In the British case, these identities must be accounted for in light of the predominant articulations of the relationship between Britain and the EU constructed within the hegemonic eurosceptic discourse of British national identity.

8.1.1 The Eurosceptic Discourse of British National Identity

The preceding chapters identify the eurosceptic discourse of British national identity in which the very idea of Britishness is constructed in opposition to the EU. This construction of separateness and apartness is reinforced by fantasies of oppression and subjugation which aim to stir the emotions of citizens and interpellate them as subjects within this discourse. The predominance of this discourse in debates about the UK's position within the EU, it is argued, is crucial to understanding the prevalence of exclusively national identity constructions in the UK, and the associated low levels of support for the EU. Because of the subject positions available within this discourse, to identify oneself as British is to define oneself in opposition to an idea of Europeanness, whose institutional embodiment is the EU.

The eurosceptic discourse both shapes, and is shaped by, broader societal discourses. Thus, it offers us a window into the discursive environment in which subject identities are formed. As such, political identities in the UK emerge in an environment in which the predominant articulation of Britishness is constructed in opposition to the EU.

The eurosceptic discourse constructs the EU as a monolithic and internally homogeneous entity from which the UK is excluded, and in opposition to which its identity is constructed. The EU appears as a hostile foreign power with quasi-imperial ambitions to assume control of ever greater areas of British life. Concerns are raised about the lack of democratic accountability in the EU and doubts are raised about the very possibility of democratic governance beyond the level of the nation-state. Consequently, the EU is seen as an elite-led project driven forwards by the dreams and vainglory of the European political elite, but running counter to the desire and instinct of citizens for national self-determination. This line of argument assumes that the nation is the natural form of political community and the nation-state the optimum form of political organisation which ought not to be superseded by trans-national governance structures. The construction of the UK in opposition to the EU is supported by fantasies of oppression and marginalisation. These, it was argued, are able to account for the enduring appeal of eurosceptic discourses.

At other times the EU appears as a forum for international bargaining between member-states. However, it is an arena in which the rules of the game are tilted in favour of France and her allies, at the expense of the UK. The EU is described with military and sporting metaphors which often harp back to past conflicts between member-states. The UK is consigned to the periphery of the EU with the new member-states outside of the inner circle of founder-members who maintain control over the levers of power and employ them for their own benefit. On many occasions, France appears as a proxy for the EU establishment and the conflicts which appear between France and the UK, therefore, assume the character

not of bilateral disagreements between member-states, but between the UK and the EU establishment.

The theme of the economy is particularly prominent in the right-wing press and is one of the principal themes in terms of which the difference between the UK and the EU are articulated. The British economy is constructed as being not just radically different from those of the Eurozone and other the continental European member-states, but also as being superior to them. In this context the UK assumes the role as a leader of economic reform in the EU and, at certain times, as the potential saviour of the European economy. Parallels are drawn between the role of the UK as economic saviour and its past role as military saviour.

The picture which emerges depicts the UK as being not just separated from the remainder of the EU, but constructed as its very antithesis. This view is supported by the fantasy of an anti-British plot in which the latter is exploited by France, Germany and their allies for their own benefit. In this context it is possible to comprehend why such a high number of British citizens express their identities in exclusively national terms. There are very few construction of Britishness available which are compatible with an overlapping idea of Europeanness, or which are not in some way founded on a negative construction of the EU. To think of oneself as British, therefore, is to define oneself as being something other than European.

To claim that these subject positions are highly circumscribed with the eurosceptic discourse does not, however, mean that such subject positions are impossible. Indeed they are evident in competing discourses centred around a different narrative of British history and interests which constructs the UK and the EU not in antithetical or antagonistic terms, but as complimentary and overlapping political entities with an equally compatible set of identity constructions. Nevertheless, within the British context the eurosceptic discourse provides the predominant articulation of British identity and Britain's historical relationship with Continental Europe.

8.1.2 *The Hegemony of the Eurosceptic Discourse*

Within the left-wing press it is not possible to discern a clear and coherent counter-discourse which challenges the assumptions of the eurosceptic discourse. Whilst the editorial line of the titles examined here is broadly supportive of the European integration process, space is given to eurosceptic commentators too. There is also a large disparity between the amount of coverage of EU affairs in the *Mirror* and the *Guardian* with the former devoting far less attention to these issues than the latter. The *Observer* too generated far fewer articles on the EU treaty reform process than its daily sister paper.

However, there are a number of pro-EU voices in evidence in the left-wing press, which challenge a number of the claims made about the EU and its consequences for Britain. Most notably, the idea of British economic superiority is subjected to scrutiny and the backwardness of the 'European' economy which emerges within the eurosceptic discourse is challenged. At certain times the equivalence constructed between the other EU member-states in terms of their common heterogeneity from the UK is broken down and replaced by a logic of difference, according to which states are involved in a variety of overlapping alliances on different issues. Nevertheless, the pro-EU voices are largely reactive to an agenda set by the right-wing press. Consequently, the subject positions construct lack both the coherence and the prominence of those that emerge within the eurosceptic discourse.

The hegemony of the eurosceptic discourse is reflected by the way in which the assumptions of the eurosceptic discourse have penetrated those sections of the media broadly sympathetic towards the EU. This manifests itself in articles by critics of the EU in newspapers whose editorial policy is pro-European (e.g. Tony Parsons in the *Mirror*). However, it is equally evident in the way in which the terminology and assumptions of the Eurosceptic discourse transmit themselves into articles which purport to be either detached, factual *reportage* of particular events within the EU or comment pieces apparently supportive of the EU. Examples of this include

references in the *Guardian* to Britain's relationship *with* the EU as opposed to the UK's position *within* the EU.

The anti-EU rhetoric also transmits itself into the left-wing press through the direct quotations of government ministers, reluctant to mount a robust defence of the European integration process to date, and to make the positive case for Britain's membership of the EU. Consequently, the eurosceptic discourse dictates the terrain on which the debates surrounding the EU take place and the terms in which they are conducted.

Despite the attempts of commentators within the left-wing press to challenge the eurosceptic discourse and to present an alternative account of the EU, it is not possible to identify a coherent pro-European discourse which challenges the most basic assumptions of the former. The contribution of those in the left-wing press is largely reactive to an agenda set by the eurosceptics; indeed, it could be argued that the main characteristic of the pro-European titles is the extent to which they remain fixated with the voices of euroscepticism in the right-wing press. The result is a discursive environment in which the eurosceptic discourse provides the hegemonic articulation of the relationship between Britain and the EU. The subject positions available within this discourse convey a set of identities which are constructed in narrow, oppositional terms and those which exist outside this are confined to the margins of the discursive environment.

8.1.3 DT and National History

This thesis both supplements and moves beyond the existing scholarship in this field which attempts to explain euroscepticism in terms of political identity constructions. In addition, it represents an advance on those studies which explain the latter in terms of essentialist readings of national history. Manuel Diez-Medrano (2003), for example, argues that the unique historical experiences of Britain, Spain and Germany provide the framework through which the EU as a political entity is viewed in each of these countries.

Despite sharing Diez-Medrano's concern to explain levels of support for the EU at societal level, I take issue with the essentialist concept of history he employs. The present study moves beyond those which have gone before by problematising the very idea of national history which is employed in studies such as Diez-Medrano's to explain public opinion towards the EU. For discourse theorists, history is not a neutral and objective account of a nation's past, but is a partial and highly political construction of a set of events which constructs a particular narrative of national heritage and destiny.

Consequently, to explain levels of support for the EU in terms of national history is to tell only half the story. What is needed in addition to this is an account of the structure of a specific national-historical narrative, and an examination of the fantasmatic support structures which maintain this. Through its encounter with Lacanian theory, DT provides us with the ontological and methodological toolkit with which to undertake this task. This study challenged the hegemonic discourses of British history and British national identity by revealing their constructed and contestable nature. Furthermore, it offered a deconstructive reading of these discourses which revealed the political and fantasmatic dimensions of the relationship they construct between Britain and the EU. In this sense the present study sees history not as a frame through which political debates are viewed but as part of a dynamic process of discursive construction in which national identity is constantly challenged and reproduced.

8.2 The Wider Significance of the Current Project

By addressing the issue of public opinion from the perspective of DT we are able to deepen our understanding of problems only partially understood through the application of mainstream social science methodologies. Consequently, the present study provides a valuable and timely contribution to one of the most vexed issues in British and European politics. However, it is hoped that the relevance of this project will extend beyond the specific issue examined here and can provide a new approach to examining the issues of nationalism and euroscepticism outside the British context.

In a time of falling levels of support for the EU across the continent, often allied to a newly assertive brand of nationalism, the approach developed in this study employs a set of concepts and logics which can potentially be applied in cases other than the UK. The idea of political identities being situated in a specific discursive environment, linked to broader social identity constructions and buttressed by specific fantasmatic support structures, provides scholars interested in questions such as euroscepticism and its relationship to national identity with a toolkit which can be applied and adapted to other cases.

Examples of potentially interesting research projects in this field would include the structure of eurosceptic discourses in Ireland, France and the Netherlands in the lead up to the failed referenda on the Treaty of Lisbon in Ireland, and the Constitutional Treaty in the other two cases. How did these debates construct the EU as a political entity and the position of the various member-states within it? How has this image shifted over time? Do changes in the discursive construction of these identities mirror changes in public opinion over a given period of time? Alternatively, it may make an interesting comparison to focus on the debates about the EU in constituent parts of the UK not examined in the present study. The latter focuses on the construction of Britain and the EU for a specifically English audience. How would the constructions of Britain within the Scottish and Welsh media, for example, compare with the findings presented here? How do these constructions relate to ideas of Scottishness and Welshness? Finally, how do these different levels of national identity relate to the EU?

In examining the wider applicability of the current project, it must be born in mind that the approach to studying euroscepticism employed here was developed specifically with the British case in mind. The focus of DT on the construction of social antagonisms, and the division of the social into oppositional camps, lends itself to the subject of British euroscepticism due to the clear separation which the eurosceptic discourse posits between both Britain and the EU, and between the national and the supranational levels of governance.

In keeping with the underlying ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions of DT, the present study cannot be seen as a template which can simply be applied unreflexively to another national context (see Howarth, 2000; 2005; Torfing, 199; 2005). Instead, the concepts and logics deployed here will need to be adapted and applied to the specific demands of the research context and the specific research questions motivating any subsequent study. Nevertheless, it is hoped that the present study will have opened up a new terrain for discourse theoretical research, which will serve as a guide for discourse theorists interested in related questions, and a challenge to discourse theorists in other areas to develop new applications to this body of theory and new fields of research to which DT can be applied.

8.3 The Horizons of Discourse Theoretical Research

In addition to contributing to our understanding of British euroscepticism, a specific aim of this project is to expand the application of DT into new areas outside the range of topics to which it had hitherto been employed. In this sense, it aims to respond to the call by discourse theorists for a new generation of scholars prepared to examine the potential application of DT to the ‘core topics’ of social and political science (Torfing, 2005: 25). To date, DT has proved a fruitful approach for scholars interested in issues such as national identity and the hegemonic construction of social myths and imaginaries (Howarth, 2000: 136). However, the expansion of DT into the field of public opinion research is an example of its deployment in an area often seen as the exclusive remit of mainstream social science.

In addressing this type of issue, discourse theorists pose a challenge to the ontological, epistemological and methodological assumptions on which this body of scholarship is grounded. However, the expansion of DT into new areas presents a similar challenge to discourse theorists themselves. They must justify the applicability of their particular social ontology within these domains and explain the insights which such an approach is able to bring. The present study goes some way to meeting this challenge, presenting as it does a robust defence of the use of DT as a means of understanding British euroscepticism and highlighting the insights which

may be drawn from this approach which cannot be matched by more traditional research tools.

As Torfing (2005: 25) argues, the expansion of DT to new domains requires a simultaneous reflection on the methodological and strategic implications this has for discourse theoretical research. It is crucial that discourse theorists are able to justify the claims they make about the cases they examine, and justify the choice of approach they take without abandoning the fundamental principals on which discourse theoretical research is based. DT is a fundamentally interpretative activity and as such implies a different set of methodological principals to mainstream social science. Similarly, the knowledge claims to which it gives rise are based on a fundamentally different set of epistemological assumptions.

Jason Glynos and David Howarth (2007) have made great strides in elucidating the logics which inform the DT as a mode of critical explanation in the social sciences. Many of the categories employed in this study are derived from their work. It is hoped that in following in the footsteps of Howarth and Glynos this study has been able to contribute to the ongoing methodological development of DT as an approach to empirical questions in the social sciences. On a theoretical level, the contribution may be limited to a few observations and refinements on their overall framework. However, given the symbiotic relationship between theory and practice on which advances in the field of DT have depended (Howarth, 2000: Torfing, 1999), it is hoped that in applying the political and fantasmatic logics identified by Glynos and Howarth I have been able to elucidate further their potential application as tools of social and political analysis. Similarly, it is hoped that critical readers will find some points of the methodology here worthy of further comment and elucidation, or as springboards for the creative application of this approach in still further areas of research.

8.4 Further Research

With any piece of research there will always be element of the project which remain underdeveloped or which remain in need of further examination or refinement. This study is certainly no exception to this rule. Whilst the argument presented in the previous chapters is based on a detailed examination of the sources collected, it was necessary to limit myself to a core set of research questions. Consequently, there are certain aspects of the eurosceptic discourse which remain unexplored. It would, for example, have been interesting to examine if (and how) the eurosceptic discourse varied between the titles examined here. Within the left-wing press, this task was made easier by the fact that the overwhelming majority of articles emanated from the *Guardian*. Thus, it was necessary to differentiate between the latter and the *Mirror*. Similarly, the wider range of opinions articulated with the *Guardian* meant it was even possible to differentiate between specific commentators with its coverage.

I would also have liked to devote more time to reflecting on the newspaper as a social artefact. To what extent are newspapers led by public attitudes and to what extent does their content shape the latter? What is the precise relationship between newspapers and other media such as television and the internet? How are the dynamic of this relationship changing due to new technology and new consumption patterns? How does the content of media debates reflect and reproduce the terminology and the assumptions of the government and the political elite? To what extent is the opposite true: in what ways do politicians adopt the language or follow the agenda of the political media?

To a large extent these debates are beyond the remit of a project of this size. As with any piece of research certain issues have to be bracketed out and certain assumptions made. For the purposes of this study which focused on the construction of certain relationships within media debates about the EU, their ideological and fantasmatic support structures and their relationship to broader questions of political identity it was simply impossible to offer a deeper discussion of the nature of newspapers and the process of consumption. Nevertheless, this has given rise to an

emerging literature in the field of CDA and offers grounds for further consideration in the future (see Fairclough, 1992; 1995; McNair, 1994; Richardson, 2007).

A number of themes emerged from the present study which are worthy of further examination. In addition to the potential application of the research design developed here to the study of euroscepticism in other EU member-states, there are a number of substantive issues pertaining to the UK more specifically which could form the basis of subsequent research projects. These were either not of strict relevance to the argument of this thesis, or could not be fully developed here due to the confines of space.

Firstly, the issue of democracy is central to the eurosceptic discourse. Arguments against the EU are made in terms of its lack of democratic accountability in its current institutional make-up, and the alleged impossibility of democratic governance beyond the nation-state. Whilst the latter claim was examined in some detail in Chapter 4, a broader set of questions emerge regarding the specific conception of democracy which informs these criticisms. An additional study might, therefore, examine the construction of democracy which emerges from the coverage of the EU. Is there for example, a uniquely British form of democracy which emerges from these debates and, if so, in how does it differ from other models of democracy. Does the EU pose a particular challenge to British (as opposed to French or German) democracy?

Secondly, many of the arguments made against the EU are framed in terms of freedom and liberty, yet there appear to be a number of overlapping meanings applied to these terms. Freedom is understood to be a particularly British phenomenon guaranteed by parliament and Britain's unique, organic constitution. With the context of debates surrounding the EU, however, a deepening of European integration is seen to be synonymous with a loss of freedom yet it is ambiguous whether the loss of individual freedom implied is of individual freedoms enjoyed by UK citizens or the freedom of the British government to pursue independent policies in certain areas. At times the two claims seem to elide into one another. The

particular use of the idea of freedom is then a second potentially fruitful avenue of study.

Thirdly, it would be interesting to examine the overlap between media discourse and government discourse in greater detail. Whilst this issue examined in passing, it is worth of a more substantial treatment in a research project more specifically focussed on this issue. Lene Hansen (2006) has written in detail about the use of post-structuralist approaches in the field of foreign policy and security studies. It would be possible to employ the conceptual categories she develops to examine the issue of British government policy towards the EU. To what extent, for example, do government spokesmen repeat the terminology and the assumptions of media discourses in the public statement? Is this form of inter-textuality evident also in official documents? How do official and media discourses reinforce or challenge one another? Finally, what conclusions could be drawn about the general orientation of British policy towards the EU and its relationship to the discursive context in which it arises?

The examinations of the construction of terms such as freedom and democracy could also form part of a more general genealogical study of the emergence of British euroscepticism. From where do the ideas which inform this discourse – the conception of the nation as an organic community, the mythology of the British constitution, the understanding of the state as the necessary unit of political organisation – emerge, and how have they developed over time? Equally, how do these ideas manifest themselves in other area of contemporary British life and on other terrains of political debate?

Whilst it was not possible to address these issues in any significant detail in the present study, the contribution of the present study is to open them up as areas for further future research. The present study will have laid the groundwork for scholars coming after this who are interested in these issues and can draw on the present study in both terms of the methodology it develops and the substantive conclusions it draws to inform their research.

8.5 Final Reflections

The process of conducting this study led me at various times to question the most basic assumptions I had made about Britain, the EU and the nature of social scientific research. I arrived at the conclusion that even our most common-sense assumptions about the social world are inseparable from the context in which we are situated. This is equally true for the social scientist as it is for the survey respondent giving his or her opinion about some aspect of the EU's activities.

Social meanings – the terms in which individuals make sense of the world – are the result of complex, historical process. Consequently, to understand the views we hold about an entity such as the EU we must first understand the meanings this has for subjects in a given environment. This study aimed to make explicit this point to a social science community which too often takes the meanings and interpretations current at one place in time as universal and unproblematic. It then aimed to rise to examine the articulation of Britain and the EU within competing discourses of British national identity.

The findings it presents, however, cannot claim to be the truth, or the definitive account of British debates on the EU. They represent instead a historically specific and contextualised reading of these debates through a specific conceptual and theoretical lens. It is hoped, nonetheless, that this will bring new insights to an issue of increasing political significance. In a time of globalisation the apparent retrenchment of the peoples of Europe into their various national communities is a subject of ever greater importance to social and political scientists.

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